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THE IDEA OF GOD IN PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

By
ANGUS HECTOR Mac LEAN, Ph.D.

Teachers College, Columbia University
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A. H. Mc. L.

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THE IDEA OF GOD IN PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Why This Investigation?

Such a study as is herein reported is called for by the world-wide discussion within and without the church respecting belief in God. The press has given sufficient publicity to this controversy to reveal a serious state of doubt, uncertainty, and indifference concerning God, and even active opposition to any theological teaching. There is little knowledge of how this situation has affected the teaching within the church.

Varied changes have occurred in the thinking of educated adults concerning God because of the scientific movement, and because of certain developments within theology. No one knows to what extent these changes have been incorporated in religious education, even though the idea of God is a focal point in the present "Fundamentalist–Modernist" conflict.

Certain changes in educational practice, resulting from new emphases in educational philosophy, which tend to give greater latitude to children in their thinking, and which seek to make them more discriminating and self-directive, have affected religious teaching sufficiently to alarm even theologians of the liberal school. An editorial in the *Canadian Journal of Religious Thought* (May-June, 1926) referring to the Convention of Religious Educators held in Toronto two years ago raises some far-reaching questions as to the function of the religious educator. Is he to take upon himself the responsibility to decide *what* to teach, or is he to regard the theologian as having this particular function, while his duty is to induce children to believe the theologians' conclusions? Though some would challenge the assumption that he should do either, the question raised here is clearly one which concerns the application of modern teaching methods to the teaching of religion. A study which will show just what theologians and religious educators are actually contributing to

the teaching materials of the church, and particularly what help they offer for the solution of difficulties in thinking about God, and in the conduct of personal relations with Him, will at least help to clarify the problem.

There has been a widespread demand from teachers and parents for guidance in saving children and youth from irreligion and distressing doubt. On the one hand, a defense of traditional Christianity which will stand up against the onslaughts of science and materialism is demanded. On the other hand, a new interpretation of God is called for which is compatible with known facts and in accord with our highest ethical standards. This latter demand comes from a suspicion that some of the roots of the apparent decay of faith among young people are to be found in the teaching in the elementary schools of the church. No clear-cut analysis of the teaching of the church with reference to this problem has heretofore been made.

The need for such a study is particularly clear because of the demand on the part of teachers for more specific help on the major social issues of our day, such as war, racial conflict, industrial strife, and the like. What is the will of God in such matters? Has the church not really been clear and specific in its answer to this question? Many textbooks have appeared in response to teachers' demands, but without any pronouncement of their theological bases.

There is an ever-increasing demand for a more reliable knowledge of the religious thinking of children, and for instruments to reveal it. Such studies as have been made are not adequate to meet this demand. Many more contributions are urgently needed.

Previous Studies in This Field

Many studies of children's ideas of God have been published. Outstanding among them are those conducted by Barnes, Tanner, Chassell, and Leuba. They have served to disclose a number of significant facts. Professor Leuba's contribution is by far the most useful. Some of his findings, which are confirmed in this study, have been taken altogether too lightly by religious educators. His study, however, is neither inclusive enough nor sufficiently specific in character. Though all of these may not apply to every study, the outstanding shortcomings of the contributions here mentioned may be briefly stated as follows:

They date back from ten to thirty years. However well they may have served their day they are now clearly out of date. Some of the most outstanding changes in religious thinking have occurred since they were published.

The instruments used have obvious defects. They make no provision for controlled responses from children. They have, therefore, just added to a great mass of unorganized stories about children's thinking of God which has been accumulating for generations.

Scarcely more than six questions are ever used. This type of questionnaire is too brief to disclose more than generalities of more or less unknown meaning.

Questions asked are extremely general in character, and for the most part completely disregard the typical experiences and vocabulary of children. This applies particularly to Chassell's study.

In none of these studies are the questions involving science and social morality which now face the church specifically raised.

There is little or no opportunity given to children to express extreme degrees of unbelief. God is generally assumed as a fact. An exception must be made of Leuba's study in this connection.

The ideas of children have never been studied in the light of the actual teaching children receive. The teaching is generally assumed to be represented by the creedal bases of the churches. There is little justification for this assumption.

A recent study of the Old Testament materials used in curricula, with particular reference to the idea of God, has been made by Marion Benedict.[1] This study is thoroughgoing in character, but for this very reason it is necessarily restricted in scope.

Scope and Purpose of This Study

This study confines itself to the idea of God in Protestant religious education as it is found in the elementary grades. The author originally intended to study representative religious groups, but, although this might be done with the literature of the churches, preliminary testing showed that no one instrument could be devised that would be equally fair to such diverse

[1] Benedict, Marion. *God and War in the Old Testament.* Teachers College, Columbia University.

groups, for example, Jews and Roman Catholics. It was, therefore, necessary to restrict the study to Protestant schools.

A wide selection of materials now used in the elementary Protestant grades has been subjected to analysis. The difficulties encountered in this analysis were legion. Only very occasionally is God treated as a subject to be studied. Consequently, references to God and inferences in stories and discussions concerning Him were difficult to interpret with accuracy. Notwithstanding, every attempt has been made to give an accurate report of the content of the church's teaching on the subject, with as many references as were calculated to be of value. Any apparent lack of documentation is due to the nature of the materials studied. It was the original intention to give some quantitative representation of the different types of teaching found. This had to be abandoned because of the fragmentary and indirect character of much of the teaching.

Considerable space is given to the analysis of the results of this survey of textbooks. It is to be hoped that this contribution will be particularly helpful to teachers.

Five hundred and seventy-five children were tested with unusually exhaustive questionnaires. The responses to the ideas contained in these questionnaires are given in percentile form with explanatory notes. In addition, the ideas of juniors and intermediates are given an evaluation in terms of scores based on a rating.

The purpose of the investigation may be expressed briefly as follows:

1. To extend knowledge of children's thinking about God, and to make an evaluation of this thinking in the light of current standards of thought and morals.
2. To give a more complete knowledge of the ideas to which the Protestant churches are subjecting their children, and of the various methods by which such ideas are presented.
3. To suggest certain recommendations for teaching about God which seem to be justified by the findings of the research.

CHAPTER II

THE IDEA OF GOD IN SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHING MATERIALS

The present chapter contains a description of the contents of a representative group of Sunday school textbooks covering the elementary grades with exclusive reference to the idea of God. Seven different series of texts have been consulted. So many references are made to these texts that an economical reference system had to be devised. Each series and text is numbered and these numbers are substituted for titles. For example, the reference, 4-6, p. 25, means series 4, text 6, page 25. Sometimes chapters, sections, and lessons are referred to instead of pages. Most references are to teachers' manuals. The letters S.M. indicate that student manuals were used. The following are the texts read:

SERIES 1: THE ABINGDON PRESS PUBLICATIONS

TEXT

1. *The Mother Teacher of Religion,* by Anna F. Betts
2. *The Beginners Book in Religion,* by Edna D. Baker
3. *Songs for the Little Child,* by Clara B. Baker
4. *The Primary Book of Religion,* by Elizabeth Colson
5. *A Second Primary Book of Religion,* by Elizabeth Colson
6. *Every Day Lessons in Religion,* by Clara B. Baker
7. *Boys and Girls of Other Lands,* by Mary Whitley
8. *A Travel Book for Juniors,* by Helen P. Hanson
9. *The Rules of the Game,* by Floyd W. Lambertson
10. *Followers of the Marked Trail,* by Nannie Lee Frayser
11. *Citizen Junior,* by Clara Ewing Espey
12. *The Geography of Bible Lands,* by Rena L. Crosby
13. *Living at Our Best,* by Grace H. Sharp and Mabel Hill
14. *Hebrew Life and Times,* by H. B. Hunting
15. *The Life and Times of Jesus,* by Frederick C. Grant
16. *The Early Days of Christianity,* by Frederick C. Grant
17. *Our Wonderful World,* by E. L. Howe

SERIES 2: THE INTERNATIONAL GRADED LESSONS (BEREAN VERSION)

TEXT

1. *The Little Child and the Heavenly Father,* by F. W. Danielson
2. *Bible Stories for the Sunday School and Home,* by Marion Thomas, Course I
3. *Bible Stories for the Sunday School and Home,* by Marion Thomas, Course II
4. *Bible Stories for the Sunday School and Home,* by Marion Thomas, Course III
5. *Stories from the Olden Times,* by Josephine Baldwin
6. *Hero Stories* (S.M.), by Josephine Baldwin
7. *Kingdom Stories* (S.M.), by Josephine Baldwin
8. *Gospel Stories* (S.M.), by Josephine Baldwin
9. *Leaders of Israel* (S.M.), by Milton S. Littlefield

SERIES 3: THE BEACON PRESS PUBLICATIONS

TEXT

1. *The Little Child in the Sunday School,* by Guild and Poor
2. *The First Book of Religion,* by Mrs. Chas. A. Lane
3. *Children of the Father,* by Francis M. Dadmun
4. *The Bible and the Bible Country,* by J. T. Sunderland
5. *Heroic Lives,* by Albert R. and Emily M. Vail
6. *God's Wonder World,* by Cora S. Cobb
7. *A Friendly World,* by Franklin & Pousland

SERIES 4: CHICAGO UNIVERSITY PRESS PUBLICATIONS

TEXT

1. *Game, Gift and Story,* by Ferris
2. *The Child in His World,* by Chamberlain and Kern
3. *The Life of Jesus,* by H. W. Gates
4. *Heroes of Israel* (S.M.), by Theodore Soares
5. *Paul of Tarsus,* by L. W. Atkinson
6. *Old Testament Story,* by Charles H. Corbett

SERIES 5: THE CHRISTIAN NURTURE SERIES (EPISCOPALIAN)

TEXT

1. *The Fatherhood of God.* Kindergarten Grade A.
2. *Our Father's Gifts.* Kindergarten Grade B.
3. *Trust in God.* First Grade Primary.
4. *God with Man.* Third Grade.
5. *God's Great Family.* Fourth Grade.
6 & 7. *Church Worship and Membership.* Sixth Grade.
8. *The Christian Seasons.* Seventh Grade.
9. *From Sheepfold to Throne.* Summer school course for Grammar School Grades.

SERIES 6: THE PILGRIM PRESS WEEK-DAY SERIES

TEXT

1. *Knights of Any Town,* by Jeanette Eloise Perkins
   The Rest of the Family, by Jeanette Eloise Perkins
2. *Second Mayflower Program Book,* by J. E. Perkins and W. Danielson
3. *At School with the Great Teacher,* by Jeanette Perkins
4. *The Junior Citizen,* by Joyce Constance Manuel

SERIES 7: THE SCRIBNER'S PUBLICATIONS

TEXT

1. *A Course for Beginners in Religious Education,* by Mary Rankin
2. *Jesus' Way of Love and Service,* by Mrs. Charles Cutting and Francis Walkley
3. *God's Loyal Children,* by Mrs. Charles Cutting
4. *The Junior Bible,* Part I. Early Heroes and Heroines, by H. B. Hunting
5. *The Junior Bible,* Part II, by H. B. Hunting
6. *The Junior Bible,* Part III, by H. B. Hunting
7. *Heroes of the Faith,* by H. W. Gates
8. *Christian Life and Conduct,* by H. B. Hunting
9. *The Story of Our Bible,* by H. B. Hunting

In addition to these textbooks, seventy-five services of worship were subjected to a similar analysis.

Three of the new International Graded Lessons were read after this chapter was written. Specific reference will be made to these later.

A. THE IDEA OF GOD IN SUNDAY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

I. PRESUPPOSITIONS

The textbooks used in Protestant Sunday schools follow very closely the traditions of the Christian Church in so far as general suppositions are concerned. There is very little direct teaching on theological presuppositions. They are for the most part taken for granted and find expression in prayers and songs and by way of implication. Textbooks are in such complete agreement on most of these assumptions that no specific references need be given. The question of God's existence or nonexistence is never raised. His living presence in the universe is taken as an unquestioned fact. It is equally taken for granted that He exercises unlimited power and control, never being thwarted in carrying

out His purposes. He is also omniscient. He is perfectly good —His mercy and kindness are inexhaustible and enduring. He is all-forgiving, and His provision for His creatures is the best that could possibly befall them. He is the Father of all—"The Heavenly Father," as He is most commonly called. His greatness and glory are inexpressible. He is Invisible Spirit. He is revealed in His threefold manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in all but the Unitarian texts. Furthermore, He provides for the continued happiness of the faithful after death.

Views that are quite incompatible with some of the above assumptions are implicit in much of the materials offered to children without correction of any sort. These will be discussed in a later chapter.

II. WHERE IS GOD?

This is one of the child's most persistent questions. What answers to it are given in Sunday school literature?

1. *God is universally present.*

This teaching is particularly prominent in all lesson systems. Any discussion of the subject contains an emphatic presentation of it.

> God is all about us because Heaven is all about us.[1]
> God is not only in the temple, but everywhere.[2]
> The presence of the Lord is everywhere.[3]

2. *God has a particular dwelling-place called Heaven.*

God is constantly associated with Heaven even in textbooks in which no direct statement as to his place of abode can be found. "The Heavenly Father" is the title most commonly given Him. Judging references to Heaven from the standpoint of the impression they are likely to make upon the child's mind, they interpret the word as meaning a particular place and not as another name for the spiritual world. Such phrases as, "Our Father Who art in Heaven," ". . . on earth as it is in Heaven," "God said in Heaven . . . ," "Around the throne of God in Heaven," etc., are in constant use. The word God scarcely ever occurs without being associated in some way with the heavenly habitation.[4] Direct statements, such as, "Heaven is a place more beautiful than the garden of Eden. God's children will be there," are not

[1] 1–1, p. 46.
[2] 3–3, p. 180.
[3] 2–8, Part III, p. 9.
[4] 3–3, p. 42; 6–2, p. 120.

infrequent.[5] Occasionally elaborate descriptions of Heaven occur which picture it as a place with gates and floors and material furniture.

3. *God and the Heaven in which He dwells are located "up above" or "up in the sky."*

It is clear that this is not deliberately taught, but taught it is, nevertheless. Songs and prayers are particularly rich in this teaching. The following quotations are from some of the most commonly used songs for primary children:

There came a child from Heaven above

I came from Heaven high above
To bring you words of joy and love

I love thee Lord Jesus,
Look down from the sky

Glory be to God on high.

O keep me ever in thy love
Dear Father, watching from above

Biblical quotations and stories adapted from scripture contribute much material of similar character. A few samples may be cited:

Every good gift is from above, coming down from the Father.[6]

The new Jerusalem shall come down out of Heaven from God.[7]

Jesus went home to be with God . . . and was carried up into Heaven. [In this instance the statement is followed by, "Heaven is not far away, it is near.]

As He blessed them He was taken up into Heaven to be with God, and a beautiful cloud hid Him from their sight.

Such stories as the ascension of Elijah to Heaven are scarcely ever passed over.[8]

Sometimes the idea appears independently of songs and scripture, which is sufficient reason to conclude that it is not altogether due to the nature of the literature used.

A new energy from above came to David.[9]

All human perfections descend from God.[10]

Very occasionally the attempt is made to forestall the impression that God is up in the sky. One of the above quotations is of this sort, but more specific denials appear at rare intervals.[11]

[5] 1–5, p. 229.
[6] 2–2, p. 35.
[7] 1–16, p. 232.
[8] 2–4, p. 272.
[9] 5–9, L. 1.
[10] 3–5, p. 86.
[11] 7–8, p. 122.

4. *Much of the scripture used without correction or comment locates God in various places, and might lead to the supposition that He moves from place to place.*

God lives in Sinai, He meets the Israelites at the Ark, He goes before them in the wilderness, He walks in the Garden, Moses goes up to meet Him in the mountain, etc. It is only occasionally that a correction is made, and the child explicitly told that this moving of God from place to place was an ancient conception and not true.[12]

5. *God lives in close and intimate contact with men.*

This is among the most emphatic and the most universally taught ideas. Typical statements are:

> God is close by though we cannot see Him, just like the air is.[13]
> It is just the same way that your mother is not far away from you when you are in one room and she is in another, so God is not far away from you.

"God is in our hearts" is one of the phrases in extremely common use.

As a general rule there is resort to scripture for the teaching of this idea. The story most frequently used for this purpose is that of Jacob's dream at Bethel, though, obviously, a story that pictures God and His angels as coming out of the Heavens is not suited to this purpose.[14] The story of Jonah is also used to show that "It is impossible to run away from God." [15]

6. *God is associated in a special way with church buildings.*

"God's house" is a term in universal use referring to the church building. "God is in His holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him," is the commonest of invocations. Sometimes it is explicitly stated that the church is the "place of all places where people can come nearest to God," while any explanation as to why this might be so never appears.[16] In the Christian Nurture Series this teaching receives an intentional and painstaking emphasis.

[12] 7–7, p. 21.
[13] 2–1, p. 64.
[14] 2–1, p. 120.
[15] 2–1, p. 190.
[16] 1–15, p. 37; 5–1, L. 1.

7. *God is present in nature.*

The universal emphasis on this teaching will be seen in the section dealing with nature as a medium of God's revelation of Himself.

8. *God is present in the ethical relations of human beings.*

This idea finds little expression except in very recent texts which are largely confined to secondary grades.[17]

III. BY WHAT MEANS IS MAN REPRESENTED AS ACHIEVING A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD?

1. *By direct communion with God.*

Incidents from scripture of direct communication are always used. God talks to Moses from the burning bush; the disciples hear His voice on the Mount of Transfiguration; He appears to Abraham, Isaac and Hagar, and Jacob at Beersheba; He gives news of impending disaster to Noah; etc.[1] Typical statements in which God is represented as talking with man as one friend with another are:

> These ten commandments which all Christians and even Mohammedan nations accept as a direct mandate from the Almighty were given to the world from Mount Sinai.[2]
>
> So Moses went up to the mountain with God. He had talked with God for so many years face to face as one friend talks to another that it was no new and strange thing that he did that day.[3]

God is sometimes depicted as giving meticulous information to His servants. He gives Samuel specific directions in the selection of a successor to Saul, passing judgment upon the sons of Jesse in turn—"Not this one"—until the one appointed of God had appeared. He tells Ananias just where to find Saul. He guides Abraham's servant through the desert in his quest for a wife for Isaac. He even gives a plan of the Ark to Noah with exact specifications as to length, breadth, and height.[4] The bulk of the texts using these materials present them with little or no modification.

God is also characterized in Old Testament citations as enter-

[17] 1–14, p. 94.
[1] 1–1, p. 217; 2–2, p. 147; 1–5, p. 184; 2–7, Part I, p. 4.
[2] 1–12, p. 168.
[3] 2–5, p. 244.
[4] 2–1, Second Year, p. 67; 2–4, p. 221; 7–4, p. 17.

ing into covenants with humans, making bargains with them and giving promises. Men and women are promised children. God repents of His rash deed to Noah and promises never to send another flood. He makes a new Christian covenant in which He promises blessings in return for love and obedience.[5] The impression that a child is likely to get from much of this material is nicely expressed in the statement, "The promise to Noah is only one of hundreds made in this book."[6]

2. *Through subordinate supernatural agencies.*

Intentional teaching of belief in angels is largely confined to two of the textbook series examined, namely, the International Graded Lessons and the Christian Nurture Series. The latter presents the teaching with emphasis. One of the expressed aims is "to quicken the child's interest in angels by showing God's care of the Holy Child through the ministry of angels."[7] One of the texts in this series even gives the name of one of these messengers.[8] The contributors to the International Lessons are satisfied with occasional statements such as this, "We read that God sends angels to take care of people. He sends them too with messages, and they bear His swift errands over land and sea."[9]

Angels are prominent in all lesson systems. The angels of the nativity find a place in materials prepared by all publishers, particularly in texts for the primary grades. Angels are also frequently represented in all series as bringing messages to such humans as Abraham, Elijah, Zachariah, and Paul.[10] Some of these appear merely because they have a place in the narratives used, but usually without question or denial of the existence of angels.

3. *Through dreams, signs, and visions.*

Many instances of dream communication from God are in common use. Joseph is warned of the danger to the Infant Jesus in this manner. Jacob's dream at Bethel is one of the stories most frequently met with. God warns Pharaoh in a dream. The wise men are informed of the wrath of Herod. Samuel is

[5] 5–4, Notes on Sec. II; 1–8, p. 79; 2–1, Part V, p. 84; 2–2, p. 229; 1–5, pp. 91–97.
[6] 2–5, p. 67.
[7] 5–1, Sec. I, L. 20.
[8] 5–1, Sec. IV, L. 20.
[9] 2–3, p. 70.
[10] 2–4, p. 89; 7–3, p. 86; 7–4, p. 10; 7–5, p. 17.

given a revelation in a dream, and in a dream Solomon is asked to name the gift that he most covets.[11] Stories of communication through signs and visions are also frequently found. The following is an interesting contribution from one of the most recent Sunday school publications:

> God appears sometimes to men in such visions as these especially when He has great service for them to do for the world. These visions are wonderfully vivid and beautiful. They remain ever afterwards. They are likely to bid us to do something which our human wills would never deem possible. *This was not the voice of Moses' subconscious mind.*[12]

Some textbooks, such as the Old Testament studies in the Constructive Series, contain many narratives of dreams and visions purporting to be from God without denial of their reality. But occasionally the contributors to these texts insert statements tending to give children a modern appreciation of the stories. These contributions will receive special attention later.

4. *Through miracles and wonders.*

Biblical stories which represent God as working wonders to give information, or to convince His people of His presence, His wrath or His favor occur frequently and sometimes comments are added confirming the belief. Among His spectacular works most frequently referred to are: the guidance of the Israelites by supernatural means through the wilderness, the manifestation of Himself through thunder and lightning at Sinai, the creation of the rainbow as a promise of good faith in the future, the transformation of Moses' rod into a snake, the flood story, and the appearance to Moses in the burning bush.[13]

Considerable teaching contrary to the idea of direct and semi-direct communication here illustrated appears. The most elementary variation from the biblical view is the belief that God used to communicate by these means, but that He does not do so now. For example,

> God does not speak to me in the same way He spoke to Samuel.
> I cannot hear God's voice as Moses did.
> This strange gift of speaking with tongues died out gradually.
> We do not need miracles today, therefore we do not get them.[14]

[11] 2–9, p. 35; 3–5, p. 88.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] 2–4, p. 224; 4–2, L. 8; 5–1; 2–2, p. 101.
[14] 2–2, p. 149; 1–16, pp. 39 and 41.

Certain interpretations imply that stories of direct communication are poetic or symbolic expressions of normal spiritual experiences. This interpretation characterizes the position of the most liberal authors contributing to Sunday school literature. It is one of the outstanding earmarks of the Unitarian publications. We find such stories as Peter's deliverance from jail, Stephen's vision, the pentecostal gift of tongues, Paul's conversion, and Jacob's wrestle with the angel explained in this way.[15]

The experiences of biblical characters are frequently referred to by these same authors in terms of normal experience, though the necessity of a modern interpretation is not often explicitly stated. They tell us that "Abraham left home at the bidding of conscience," rather than saying that God commanded him to go; and that Gideon "made up his mind" while in the wine press, instead of having a vision from God.[16] At other times these authors make statements that seem to cast doubt upon the intention apparent in these quotations. For example, the author of one of the statements just referred to says in another place, "To the writer, the whole course of this history [Hebrew history] means the accomplishment of God's purpose as revealed to Abraham." [17] And again, "Precisely how God spoke to Abraham, we do not know." [18]

More explicit denial of the idea of such modes of communication occasionally appear, such as the following:

> God does not reveal Himself to the eyes of men or address them in a manner to be heard by human ears, but through conscience and the natural mental processes.[19]
>
> Paul's conversion was like other leadings he had had. We would call it now the working of the subconscious mind.[20]
>
> The genuinely spiritual of every age are those who, having not seen with fleshly eyes, have nevertheless believed. Flesh and blood have not revealed it unto them, but the Father in Heaven whispering in the secret places of the heart.[21]
>
> When God speaks to us we hear His voice, we feel when we do wrong or good.[22]

It is worth noting that practically all of this more liberal teaching comes from three of the lesson systems studied, namely,

[15] 4–4, pp. 15 and 48; 3–7.
[16] 4–4, p. 6; 7–4, p. 2; 2–9, pp. 50 and 113.
[17] 7–4, p. 41.
[18] 7–4, p. 12.
[19] 4–4, p. 199.
[20] 4–5.
[21] 7–5, p. 18.
[22] 1–4, p. 114.

the Constructive Series, the Beacon Press publications, and Scribner's publications.

5. *God reveals Himself through the Bible.*

Such references to the Bible as "God's word," "The word of the Lord," and "His holy word" are very characteristic of all textbook series. That these do not always mean the same thing to different authors is clear. What the real meanings are can only be guessed after a careful study of the entire work of an author. But some statements leave little doubt of their meaning, for example:

> The Bible is one of God's ways of speaking to us, and has a message different from all others. It is God's book. It tells about Him and helps us to know Him better.[23]
>
> It might need a whole lifetime to tell all the stories in the Bible, to write down *every one of God's rules for living.*[24]

In one instance a statement is followed by the question,

> Would you like to know how I know that? Read Revelation, 15, 3-4.[25]
>
> The word of God shall stand forever. Many have tried to destroy it, but the promise of our text has never failed.[26]

More liberal interpretations are illustrated by the following:

> The Bible is sacred because it contains the most important teachings of our religion.
>
> We should respect other people's Bibles as we want them to respect ours.[27]

One author says, in substance:

> The Bible is a book from God as any other good thing is from God. The Bible comes in a natural way as do trees, and is from God as a tree is from God. "If there is anything in the Bible that is not true, I think we ought not to say that that is from God."[28]

Certain more extended studies of the Bible, such as Hunting's *The Story of Our Bible,* published by Scribner's, make a special effort to show, through a study of the Bible, the natural growth of religious experiences from crude and unethical to more enlightened and more moral forms. This, of course, does away with the abnormal character of biblical revelation. Special credit

[23] 2–3, pp. 21 and 25.
[24] 6–3, p. 110.
[25] 2–5, p. 245.
[26] 2–7, Sec. III, p. 43.
[27] 3–4, p. 5.
[28] 3–4, p. 38.

should be given to the publications of the University of Chicago Press, the Beacon Press, and Scribner's for such liberal interpretations, and particularly to the contributions of such writers as Soares, Hunting, and Gates.

6. *God reveals His will through His chosen teachers.*

No matter how religious experiences are interpreted there seems to be universal agreement in the belief that God appoints and prepares men for special purposes. Nations also share in this divine favor. Special reference is made to biblical heroes and heroines, and outstanding religious leaders of all races and nationalities. That biblical heroes were so chosen is a belief common to all series. The emphasis on God's guidance as manifested in the lives of moderns is characteristic of a few courses, such as *Heroes of the Faith,* published by Scribner's, and *Heroic Lives,* published by the Beacon Press. Any real appreciative recognition of God's guidance of such leaders as Buddha and Confucius is confined to Unitarian literature. All texts are, of course, most emphatic in their presentation of Jesus as the supreme revelation.

7. *God speaks through conscience, or "in the heart of man."*

Although this idea is never consistently followed out, it is one teaching upon which all writers are in accord. To some it is one of God's ways of communication, to a few it is the one and only way, or, at least, the chief medium of revelation. Conscience is universally identified with the voice of God in the human soul. Frequently God is said to give "thoughts to think." [29] An amazing fact is that in all but one of the texts read, no recognition is given to the nature of conscience and its dependence upon experience, and in this instance the idea is not presented for discussion with children. Conscience is spoken of as if it were a special organ with which to hear the infallible word of God.[30]

8. *God reveals Himself through Nature.*

Learning of God through acquaintance with His "wonderful world" finds special emphasis in two texts, namely, *God's Wonder World* and *Our Wonderful World.*[31] In these some very

[29] 2–3, p. 80; 2–1, p. 62; 7–3, p. 77.

[30] 3–1, p. 113.

[31] *God's Wonder World,* Unitarian Press; *Our Wonderful World,* Abingdon Press.

excellent guidance for nature study is given in the hope that a knowledge of the world and the laws that govern it will enhance the spiritual life. But in all other texts which deal with the subject, and practically all primary texts do, nature lessons are given to show how nicely God provides for His creatures, and certain facts of nature are selected to support this theme, while many others are entirely overlooked. Nature study is never given for its own sake, but as lessons on God. The child is scarcely ever given knowledge or experience in observation to help him learn for himself. The accumulative impression given through this material must be characterized as nature faking of an extreme sort. Ample references are provided in another section dealing with God's provision for His creatures.

9. *Other media of revelation which receive comparatively little attention.*

(1) The Christian Nurture Series gives special emphasis to the church, the sacraments, and the Holy Spirit as ways and means of acquiring knowledge of God, but other series neglect them almost entirely and never subject them to systematic treatment.

(2) The work of scientific experimenters receives some attention in the Unitarian textbooks.

(3) "God is also found in men, in the response to human need, and in the will of those in authority over us." [32]

Occasionally care is taken to show that God's revelation of Himself through any of the means referred to is contingent upon certain forms of conduct, such as, unquestioning obedience and absolute dependence, unselfishness, the will to learn what God's will is, constant practice, and a sense of need.[33]

IV. GOD'S ATTRIBUTES, WILL AND WORKS, AS REVEALED IN:

1. *His creative acts.*

The versions of the story of creation range from the literal, or near literal, interpretation of the first two chapters of Genesis to the planetesimal hypothesis of Chamberlain. The biblical versions are found in such texts as *Every Day Lessons in Re-*

[32] 2–3, p. 68; 7–1, p. 164; 2–9, p. 113.

[33] 7–3, p. 15; 2–4, p. 20; 2–5, p. 70; 3–5, p. 33; 4–4, p. 26; 4–4, T. M., p. 21; 7–7 T. M., p. 5; 7–5, p. 17; 7–8, p. 101.

ligion in the Abingdon Press Series, and *Bible Stories for the Sunday School and Home* in the International Series. In these texts the stories are given in biblical terms with some very elementary modifications. God's "Let there be . . ." occupies a conspicuous place; all forms of life are said to be called into being fully developed; the human male is created without any apparent thought of the propagation of his kind, woman being an afterthought; the waters of the earth are said to have been called together in one place, and other views of similarly ancient brand are presented. The limiting of the period of the creation of life to the space of six days is generally omitted, and so is the conspicuous place given to Adam's rib in the creation of the first woman.

A similar version is found in *Trust in God,* a first-grade course in the Christian Nurture series, but a modernized version of the creation is added which is worth quoting:

> Once upon a time in every place through the sky where we now see the sun shine and the moon and stars shine at night, there was nothing but whirling star dust. Have you ever seen an automobile go driving by and filling the air behind it with little particles of dust that look like smoke? Well, that is what the whole world was full of. God set it whirling and dancing, and made certain little particles of dust come together, and built up a lot of little round balls that we call stars and worlds. To each of these God gave a certain path to follow, and it never gets out of the way, and never bumps into another star.

In *Children of the Father,* a primary text in the Beacon series, a somewhat extreme position is taken. According to this text no one knows anything about the creation of worlds and of life, though everyone would like to know. Every country has its own story, so the child is told, and from among them all the one selected for telling in this particular book is the story of Prometheus. No reason is given for the selection of this ancient Greek myth.

In *The Child in His World,* a primary text in the Constructive series, a real attempt is made to introduce the child to the problem and mystery of creation as faced by modern scientists. Various theories are summarized—the primitive conceptions of creation, among which the Hebrew versions are mentioned: the Copernican theory; the nebular hypothesis of La Place; and finally the planetesimal hypothesis of Chamberlain. The fact

that the authors of this text believe that the scientific view should precede the Genesis stories in teaching places this particular lesson in a class by itself. Yet this same lesson is followed immediately by a most traditional interpretation of Jesus' miraculous feeding of the five thousand.

A point of special importance is that in every one of the texts just referred to, with which other texts from all lesson systems might be mentioned, some hint is given of the unreliability of the book of Genesis as a source of either historical or scientific information. In the International text referred to, a note to this effect is included for the enlightenment of the teacher, though not expressly for children. In the Abingdon texts the traditional story is called a "Beautiful Poem," and nothing more realistic is added. The Christian Nurture text quoted makes a particular point of enlightening children as to the unreliability of biblical narratives, lest they acquire ideas which will have to be contradicted later, though they are advised not to criticize the story. All texts insist upon the great religious truth contained in the story, namely, that it *was* God who started things in the beginning, and still controls and maintains all.

A discussion of creation in *The Story of Our Bible,* a Scribner's publication, presents a thoroughly historical treatment of the "old world tales" of creation and the flood, taking particular pains to show the high moral quality of the Hebrew contributions to these tales, and for the most part assuming a knowledge on the part of children of the position of modern science on the subject.

A point of particular significance for a survey of this sort is the absence of any adequate recognition of the theory of evolution in the discussions on the creation of life. Even in the lesson from *The Child and His World,* which was referred to as giving special attention to scientific theories, the theory of the progressive development of life from lower to higher forms is overlooked entirely. In this instance, the oversight may be in the interest of the education of young children, but in none of the texts read is there any attempt to explain the theory to children. Is the omission due to the belief that this subject is adequately treated in the public schools? One must conclude that this is not so, since, from the standpoint of the churches, the religious appreciation of the story of creation necessitates the addition of

the assumption "God" to the conclusions of the scientists. Can the harmonizing of two such opposing approaches to life be left to the child unaided?

The teaching on creation may, therefore, be summarized as containing the following material:

1. Biblical material which is admittedly neither scientific nor historical, without any historical or scientific data being added.

2. Modernized stories in which God plays as conspicuous a part as He does in the Hebrew stories. These must be considered as additions to the Hebrew tales and not as new interpretations. There is nothing more modern in God making particles of dust to spin and dance than there is in His creating of man from the dust of the earth.

3. Partial presentation of scientific views, while withholding data on the more controversial questions.

4. Material which places all knowledge of the subject on a level with ancient mythical interpretations.

In conclusion, another point worth noting is that God is given credit only for creating the beautiful and delightful. The spirit of the teaching is admirably expressed in words of the hymn so frequently used with primary children:

> All things bright and beautiful,
> All creatures great and small,
> All things wise and wonderful;
> The Lord God made them all.

There is a side of life with which God is never associated. This will be discussed further in a later section.

2. *His relation to the lower orders of nature and the inanimate world.*

God exercises a most loving and merciful care over all birds and animals. "He whispers to the squirrels, telling them to store away nuts." [1] "He loves and cares for every little creature, even the tiniest little bird." [2] There is a most unusual emphasis given to this teaching in all series. Only a small portion of many references to this type of material can be cited. The assumption seems to be that a knowledge of God's wisdom and goodness

[1] 2–1, p. 53.

[2] 1–8, p. 194; 1–12, pp. 138 and 164; 2–2, p. 124; 3–1, pp. 59, 153 and 169; 7–7, p. 211, and nearly all texts in Series 5.

can be taught by calling attention to the wonders of nature and connecting God with them as the all-wise provider and protector who gives clothes in the form of feathers, or wool, or hair, provides food and protection from danger, teaches every creature to build nests, to seek food, and to protect its young. The amount of scientific facts given is insignificant, the theological aim being paramount. All the disagreeable facts of nature, its tragedies and ruthlessness are omitted. Some exception must be made in the case of two texts already referred to [3] but, even in these, nature is altogether too sweet and lovely to be true to fact.

Another teaching which is of especial interest here, though belonging equally to the next section, is that all the lower orders of nature are created for man's particular benefit. This is not at all universal, but is implicit in a great many texts in which it is not intentionally stated. It is met with most frequently in the International Graded Lessons, but is not by any means confined to these. Some of the following appear in texts recently published:

Every blade of grass is a present from God; He wants you to enjoy every plantain, every banana, every peanut, every cocoanut. He made them for you. How often have I said that God made everything for men to enjoy.[4]

God created fish and birds and cattle and all living things so that the earth might be a wonderful place for His people. . . . When the earth was ready to be a home for His people God made man.[5]

The lambs are for thy clothing.[6]

Teaching regarding God's relation to the natural elements is somewhat conflicting. First, most of the material gives the impression that God is in direct and immediate control of the weather. Lessons on the deluge, the crossing of the Red Sea with the aid of a kindly wind sent from God, and the benign purpose of God in sending rain for the good of plants help to create this impression. Frequently golden texts, such as, "He makes the wind to blow," and "He causeth to come down the rain," are used in connection with nature stories.[7] Children are also encouraged in some texts to ask God for such things as "a pleasant day" or a "fine day for the picnic." If, after such a prayer, the rain pours, the child is reminded that the rain made

[3] 3–6 and 1–17.
[4] 6–3, p. 140.
[5] 2–2, p. 26.
[6] 2–1, p. 72.
[7] 2–1, p. 67.

"Farmer Brown happy because it made things grow and cattle get the grass that grows." [8] The implication of this type of material is that God has a kindly purpose in sending any kind of weather. There is an astonishing silence on the destruction of life and property caused by unkindly weather, except when the story of the deluge is told and in this story God's purpose is clearly destructive.

One author insists that the contrary is true, that people should not pray for rain and such things because *law* controls the weather.[9] But this author gives no recognition to the possibility that other phenomena may be equally "controlled" by law.

In some texts, especially the Old Testament studies in the Constructive Series, much is made of natural law in explaining such narratives as those dealing with the plagues in Egypt. Corbett's *Old Testament Story* may be mentioned as a sample. That God does nothing contrary to natural law is implicit throughout this volume. In these studies, however, God is scarcely ever mentioned except as He was seen to relate Himself to natural phenomena by Old Testament characters.[10] At the same time this same series presents without explanation a great deal of material in which God is seen to be working at cross purposes with natural law.

An intermediary position is presented by the author of *The Junior Bible* in the Scribner's series who explains Moses' vision of the burning bush, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the plagues of Egypt as natural phenomena, but as "divinely directed and of extraordinary magnitude and severity." [11]

Nowhere in all the literature read is any attempt made to reconcile the idea of an all-powerful God who exercises perfect love toward His creatures with the natural phenomena which effect tragedy as well as happiness for the just and the unjust alike. What is a thoughtful child left to imply if it is not that cyclones and earthquakes and similarly destructive forces are also instruments of God's righteous government?

3. *His participation in human affairs.*

God is even more generous in His dealings with humans than He is toward birds and animals. His relations with man may be summarized as follows:

[8] 1–1, p. 58; 2–2.
[9] 6–3, p. 126.
[10] 3–2, p. 42; 3–6, p. 25; 4–6, etc.
[11] 7–4, p. 53.

(1) *He provides food, clothing, and other necessities, and all the things we enjoy.*

This belief is given ample support from scripture. The Israelites are fed by manna from Heaven; Elijah is fed by God's special messengers; and the widow's oil and meal were miraculously replenished while God's prophet abode with her.[12] Much of the comment on these and similar stories gives them unquestioned support. For example, the disciples' miraculous catch of fishes is commented upon as follows, "Sometimes God gives us the things we need in an unusual way."[13] The children of Israel are said to have been "fed by the very hand of God" while in the desert. Others use this story to teach that "God knows that we need food and provides it."[14] Many such statements as the following are met with:

> If God provides so for the birds and the flowers, how much more for His children. . . . It is God who gives you life; can't you trust Him for food?[15]
>
> God sends every day the things we need most.[16]
>
> God must have loved that little boy to give Him so many things.[17]

The last quotation expresses definitely the impression that most of the teaching on God's gifts is likely to make upon children, namely, that God is not only the creator who makes lavish provision for all life, but that He bestows these gifts upon us individually and personally. A story in one of the Beacon texts tells how God made a flower grow in a drain pipe near the window of a child who was ill and unable to go out, just to make her happy.[18] There is no attempt made to reconcile this teaching with the want and unhappiness of innocent and helpless people. The Pilgrim Press supplementary week-day texts make a special point occasionally to show how God's kindness to the needy is dependent upon the good will and efforts of other people.[19] Many texts claim that God desires human help, but that he is dependent upon it is almost altogether confined to these texts. The section dealing with man's duty to coöperate with God gives further data on this question.

[12] 2–2, pp. 45 and 202; 2–7, Part II, p. 39; 2–9, p. 109.
[13] 7–2, p. 33.
[14] 2–2, p. 45; 6–4, p. 91.
[15] 2–6, Part II, p. 15.
[16] 1–4, p. 25.
[17] 2–1, p. 73.
[18] 3–2, p. 15.
[19] 6–4, p. 92; 7–8, p. 50.

(2) *He provides every aspiration for doing good, as well as the power and wisdom manifested in the lives of those who serve Him.*

This teaching is emphasized in all lesson systems. God is the giver of wisdom and strength and, not only so, He will also give such gifts to all who enlist under His banner. Such people are certain of victory and nothing can stand against them. Some idea of the quantity of this teaching that is current can be gained from the number of references here submitted.[20]

(3) *He guards and protects people from danger.*

Incidents from biblical narratives which show God's miraculous protection of His people are selected as very choice teaching materials by the writers in the more conservative publications, and are given a conspicuous place in all series. Among the stories most frequently chosen to teach this belief is Daniel's astonishing escape from the lions.[21] This and similar stories are sometimes deliberately used with the hope that "the protection of all who were in the midst of overwhelming disaster will convince the children of God's power of protection." Sometimes, and particularly in the more liberal texts, such stories are given with little or no comment. Other favorite stories are the story of the flood and of the rescue of the three young Hebrews from the fiery furnace.[22]

A considerable amount of the teaching found also implies that such protection is offered still to those who serve God. One author tells how Peter Parker's ship narrowly escaped from an attack by pirates while he dutifully read from the Psalter.[23] Another writer gives the unavoidable impression that such care is given to children when they ride on the train.[24] Another says that the rainbow was set in the sky so that "after every storm, however hard, we may still remember that God is taking care of people on the earth He created." [25] Much space is also given

[20] 1–1, p. 50; 1–11, Lesson on the Deluge; 1–15, p. 124; 2–2, p. 233; 2–4, pp. 70 and 275; 2–9, p. 104; 3–1, p. 53; 3–5, pp. 24 and 82; 5–3, L. 4; 5–9, L. 3; 6–4, pp. 33 and 79; 7–4, p. 86; 7–7, p. 13; 7–8, pp. 1, 7 and 186.

[21] 1–8, p. 12; 2–1, p. 227; 2–3, p. 44; 2–7, Part IV, p. 6; 2–9, p. 192; 5–3, L. 5.

[22] 1–1, p. 218; 1–4, p. 33; 1–5, pp. 91–97; 2–4, p. 315; 2–5, p. 67; 2–7, Part IV, p. 4; 5–1, L. 5.

[23] 2–8, Sec. III, p. 18.

[24] 2–1, p. 123.

[25] 2–2, p. 229.

to the belief that God protects children at night, and when they are afraid.[26]

God's protecting care is not confined to miraculous rescues. The love and care of mothers and fathers is the love and care of God. For example, "He made Moses' mother *think* to put him in the basket." "He *showed* her how to save him."[27]

Some of the contributors to the International and Christian Nurture series seem, however, particularly anxious to show that God's care is not confined to such care as is mediated through the love and kindness of other people. To give evidence of this "supplemental care," as it is called, the story most commonly chosen is that of Elijah being fed by the ravens, and a few others of similar character.[28]

Some authors are more guarded in their teaching because apparently more aware of the implicit difficulties in teaching of God's protecting care, but such authors are decidedly in the minority and do not always seem consistent in their teaching. One of the more courageous presents the argument that while the wind blew the waters of the Red Sea back allowing the Israelites to cross, God was responsible for bringing them to the Sea at the very moment when this crossing was possible. Arguing in the same vein, he points out that God brought the Israelites to the Jordan just at the time when a landslide had temporarily dammed the stream, thus allowing them to cross.[29] A position represented in the contributions of liberal theologians is that God does not *always* save people from suffering and death. Among those who take this position might be mentioned Soares and Hunting. Another position also represented is that the realization of God's favor does not mean exemption from suffering, but may be realized in the actual experience of pain and hardship. Only one or two authors give this thought specific attention.[30]

(4) *He restores to life and health.*

Stories of miraculous healing found in scripture are all used, and scarcely ever questioned. God also restores the dead to life.[31]

[26] 3–2, p. 2; 1–1, p. 40; 4–2; 6–2, p. 140.
[27] 2–1, pp. 40 and 74.
[28] 2–2, pp. 87 and 98; 2–4, p. 252; 5–3, L. 3; 2–1, pp. 157, 65 and 69.
[29] 7–4, pp. 70 and 92.
[30] 4–3; 4–4, p. 383; 7–8, pp. 116 and 119. See also reference 29.
[31] 2–2, p. 216; 2–4, p. 281; 4–3.

(5) *The conduct He requires or of which He approves.*

Chief among the virtues set forth as pleasing to God is *obedience to His will.* Though a few other ethical concepts receive almost as much attention as does obedience, none are so basic or so inclusive in character. Biblical literature has furnished textbook writers with a mass of dramatic materials with which to show children the advantages of obedience and the dire consequences of disobedience to God. Among the incidents most frequently referred to are the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden; Abraham's willing departure from Ur of Chaldea at God's bidding; the story of the rejection of Saul for refusing to exterminate the Amalekites—men, women, children, and cattle; Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac; Jesus commanding the wind and the waves to be still, etc.[32] The most extreme use of such materials is found in the International Graded Lessons, and the Christian Nurture Series. For example, the rejection of Saul is used to show that "Obedience is better than sacrifice" and commented upon in this fashion: "Saul loses his chance to be a truly great king through choosing to do his own way. . . . So you see that if Saul had loved God as Samuel did, God Himself would have been the real ruler of the people of Israel." [33] The author of *Bible Stories for the Sunday School and Home* (International series) tells the story of the gathering of manna in the desert, in substance, as follows: When God told the Israelites to gather fresh manna every morning, some were afraid that there would not be any on the next day, so they kept some, but it spoiled and was not fit to eat. But when God told them to gather enough on the sixth day to last them over the Sabbath, some did not do this, thinking it would spoil. But those who kept it found it fresh next day, and those who did not keep it had none because the Lord did not send any on the Sabbath.

This same author thinks that the Israelites' failure to enter Canaan on the first attempt was due to their disobedience. They had to return to the wilderness until they learned how to obey. She also thinks that the Israelites were taken by the Lord by way of the Jordan that they might be taught a lesson in obedience.[34]

[32] 1–5, p. 227; 1-10; 2–5, p. 41; 4–2, L. 49; 7–4, pp. 13, 14, 15.
[33] 2–6, Part I, p. 7; 2–7, Part I, p. 6.
[34] 2–3, pp. 238, 249, and 255.

Nature lessons are sometimes used to teach obedience. The ants are pointed to as creatures who get along harmoniously because "they all work according to God's laws for them." The waves of the sea are also mentioned as samples of obedience—"they never come farther than the shore." [35]

Statements that are more characteristic of all Sunday school helps are:

> The ten commandments are God's rules for us to live by.
> They really sum up our duties to God and man.[36]
> God values supremely the surrender of the personal will.[37]

God also desires *obedience to parents, teachers, and others in authority.* Children are urged constantly to "obey without question," "quickly" and "cheerfully" the laws of the home, church, and school.[38] The possibility of such laws being themselves out of harmony with God's will is disregarded. In one instance, parents are likened to a football coach who knows the game and requires ready and cheerful obedience. This expresses the implication of nearly all the teaching on obedience to parents. The parents know best. Obedience as such is a virtue.

In some instances obedience to parents is identified more closely with obedience to God. The express aim of one lesson is "To help children feel that by obeying those who care for them (parents and teachers are referred to), and by obeying the voice in the heart, they are obeying God." [39]

Obedience to Jesus receives a universal emphasis. Christian conduct is interpreted as a life of obedience to rules. The child is certainly not allowed to experience the freedom Paul experienced in turning from "the law" to a life of spiritual freedom. The teaching on Jesus is but a collection of rules appended to the Ten Commandments.[40]

Obedience to the laws of the state receives considerable attention, although the subject is never treated systematically and specifically. Frequently, the appeal for loyalty and obedience to the state is made in exactly the same terms as are appeals

[35] 2–3, p. 281.
[36] 7–4, p. 73.
[37] 7–4, p. 13. See also 1–10, p. 56; 3–2, p. 9; 3–3, pp. 59–60; 4–2, p. 22.
[38] 7–8, p. 39.
[39] 7–3, Part I (2nd year), p. 14. See also 1–4, pp. 14 and 168; 2–1, p. 188; 2–2, p. 177; 3–3, p. 3; 4–2, Series II; 7–4, L. 13; 5–8, Sec. V; 7–8, p. 37.
[40] 2–2, p. 9; 2–5, p. 228; 7–8, Introduction, pp. 1 and 2.

for loyalty to God. *The Child in His World,* a text in the Constructive Studies, presents some of the clearest examples:

> Patriotism is an essential element in a symmetrical religious life.
> Inspire the child with love even to the extent of giving his life for his country.

In this text sacrifice for one's country is clearly a virtue in itself. The glory of sacrifice is given especial attention, and the references are all to sacrifices in battle. With these war references such texts as "The Lord is mindful of His own" and "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life" are offered for memorization. The scripture passages most referred to are Psalms 24 and 100 in which a warring national God figures most prominently. The following reference to the flag illustrates the teaching in this volume:

> Help us to keep the laws of our land; may they be to us as Thy laws.[41]
> The flag is the symbol of God, the author of law and the giver of freedom.

A similar sentiment is expressed in one of the Abingdon texts:

> My land is God's land;
> My flag is God's flag.[42]

In other texts statements to the contrary appear in isolated and unconnected paragraphs. In these, obedience and loyalty to the state are urged only when these are in harmony with God's laws. One of the very infrequent definite statements is, "When God's laws and human laws conflict, obey God's laws." [43] Hunting, in his text *The Junior Bible,* expresses a devotion to God's will that takes unmistakable precedence over devotion to country. He compares modern political and industrial corruption to Jezebel, saying this corruption is "all under the form of law and in the name of justice." He also states that it is immoral to be "for one's country right or wrong." The general emphasis in this text is that "whole-hearted loyalty to the right is the safest thing in the world" and "the right" is revealed through the needs and complaints and suffering of the masses. This is the only text in which teaching of this character is found.[44]

[41] 4–2, Lesson Series IX.
[42] 1–5, p. 216.
[43] 6–3, p. 119.
[44] 7–5, p. 105.

A statement in Gates' *Heroes of the Faith* sets brotherly kindness and love, which are God's laws, above the laws of one's country.[45]

All textbook series make use of much biblical material in which the breaking of the law of the land is approved, though such material is never intentionally presented in this light. Daniel refuses to obey the law which infringed upon his religious habits, Elijah fights against the dictates of his king and wins, Peter insists upon speaking his heart and mind without regard to legal restrictions and even breaks jail, and Jesus breaks the Jewish law.[46] Extrabiblical material of this character appears occasionally. A Japanese hero of a story breaks his country's law in order to escape to a land "where the true God is known."[47] Missionaries break the laws of Japan in order to preach the gospel in that country.[48]

What is God's will in regard to participation in war and other violent relations? As was mentioned in the statement on presuppositions, God loves all races and peoples and classes equally, and desires that they live together peaceably as one great family. Not one of the authors whose contributions were read would dare make a specific denial of this. Notwithstanding this general emphasis in all curricula, God is said to have a primary interest in the affairs of the Jewish nation. That this is not at variance with the above statement is argued in such terms as these:

> God chose the Jews not as His pet nation, but because they were worthy to do God's work.[49]
>
> We like to think that when the time came for people to participate in the brotherhood of man, God gave them the new covenant, and He gave it to the people who were to be trusted.[50]
>
> God has no favorite nation, but He had a great mission for the Jews.[51]

That God does act very much like one who has a pet nation for whose advantage He would go to any length is clearly shown in the Old Testament materials used in most Sunday school textbooks. Marion Benedict in her book, *God and War in the Old Testament,* has dwelt at length upon this question. Our interest here is to note that such material is not only used because it is

[45] 7–7, p. 27.
[46] 2–7, Part IV, p. 7; 2–3, p. 44; 3–3, p. 115.
[47] 2–6, p. 6.
[48] 7–7, p. 52.
[49] 7–6, p. 12.
[50] 1–13, p. 182.
[51] 1–14, p. 131.

from the Bible but is also given approval by many authors. With reference to Elijah's contest with the Baal worshipers in Carmel, one author says, "Those whom God assists are more than a match for their enemies." [52] Another presents God as making the decree that the Israelites should be victorious in battle as long as His servant Moses held up his hands.[53] With reference to the conquest of Canaan, children are told that "God had promised Joshua victory so long as He obeyed the divine commands." [54] The International texts present the spies who went into Canaan, and were so eager to fight, as samples of great "moral heroism." A golden text used in this series of lessons is, "Let us go up at once and possess it." [55] In one text "the aggressive impulse," so characteristic of these heroes of the conquest, is spoken of as the manifestation of God's presence with them.[56] Also, God sends Gideon to fight against the Midianites, David kills Goliath in God's name. God was the cause of David's successful entry into Jerusalem, the ark of the covenant being brought in with great ceremony in grateful acknowledgment. God is also presented as experiencing savage joy in exterminating the Egyptians. With this story of the Exodus, the song of triumph in which God's praises are sung for slaying "the horse and his rider" is nearly always presented.[57] In Soares' book, *Heroes of Israel,* nearly all such Old Testament stories are told. A great galaxy of military heroes, chosen of God, are given great praise. The author is particularly lavish with his praise of Gideon. Implicit commendation of these warlike exploits is found in such remarks as, "With a great faith in God and a wonderful courage he defeated great armies," and "Isn't it strange that after a great victory Gideon should forget God?" [58]

Some of this material is used to teach lessons that are exceedingly difficult to draw from them. For example, a lesson on sharing is drawn from David's distribution of the spoils following a victory over the Amalekites.[59]

[52] 1–9. See also 2–7, Part IV, p. 38.
[53] 1–10. See also 2–6, Part IV, p. 31.
[54] 1–10 on the Conquest of Canaan.
[55] 2–5, pp. 226 and 234.
[56] 7–4, p. 81.
[57] 1–12, pp. 63 and 169; 2–6, Part IV, p. 38; 2–7, Part I, pp. 9 and 38; 5–9, Lesson 10.
[58] 4–4, p. 370.
[59] 6–4, p. 70.

God's approval of war is not given in connection with biblical narratives only. Some modern stories of similar import are given a place. Judson, a missionary to India, commenting on the conquest of India by Great Britain, is quoted as saying, "God opens the way by leading a Christian nation to subdue the country." One of the author's own comments is, "He [Judson] never lost his trust in the Heavenly Father. He knew that the outcome of war must be to establish English rule." [60] The forcing of western influence upon Japan by Admiral Perry and the combined fleets of England, Holland, and France is spoken of by one writer in this manner, "They soon convinced the Japanese that these 'Barbarians' knew how to enforce their messages, and that it was futile to oppose them. It was the greatest service that could have been rendered to the country." [61] The author of this statement is particularly free with the use of military terms in emphasizing Christian virtues. The philosophy which he ascribes to Judas Maccabeus, "Trust God and keep your powder dry," characterizes his own position.[62]

In a seventh-grade text in the Christian Nurture Series a story is told of a stranger knight who had been given hospitality. His enemies soon appeared, seeking his life. Those with whom he sought refuge voted to go to war to protect him. The following question is then raised for class discussion. "How many believe they should fight to defend him, even though a hundred of their own soldiers should be killed in battle?" Then follows a suggestion to the teacher, "Count the children who vote each way. If the story has been told well, the vote should be unanimous to fight." [63] In the text the same spirit pervades the discussion of the World War and America's participation in it. Going to war is definitely connected with the religious impulse. "In the Great War, we heard of many instances of soldiers going into battle with great courage. They were brave because they thought Christ was with them. We read of some soldiers who had visions of Christ leading them into battle."

And now we must face a difficulty that is constantly met with in attempting to analyze these teaching materials. Alongside of the type of material just illustrated, frequent statements appear which indicate that war is entirely out of harmony with God's

[60] 2–6, Part III, p. 43.
[61] 7–7, p. 54.
[62] 7–7, p. 19.
[63] 5–8, L. 17.

will. The text in which the British conquest of India is approved lauds the peaceful entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and quotes with enthusiasm, "Not with armies and battle cries does He come." [64] In another text which is particularly rich in militaristic terms and stories involving God in war, it is said that "War multiplies sorrows and sufferings and destroys happiness. In war, promises are broken and life and property destroyed. . . ." And also, that "When all people love and obey God, justice and peace and safety will be found in every land." [65] The same author who so heartily approved of forcing Japan to open her doors, extols the pacifistic attitude of William Penn in refusing to fight the Indians.[66]

At rare intervals texts from most series express disapproval of war and violence. The massacre following Elijah's triumph over the Baalites is characterized as unchristian.[67] Sometimes only wars of defense are recognized as justifiable.[68] One repudiates the idea that a person should ever do evil to bring about good. Some of the texts published by the Abingdon Press present considerable sentiment against war, with a definite forward look to world peace, and the possibility of this being brought about through such institutions as the League of Nations and the World Court.[69] The author of *Old Testament Story,* published by the Chicago University Press, sets the principles of Jesus over against the idea that God was pleased with such incidents as the destruction of Jericho. Such statements are so occasional in this text, however, that they cannot be considered as effective in offsetting the accumulative effect of the teaching in the narratives that are presented without discussion of the question involved in their implicit sanctioning of war.

What is to be concluded in regard to teaching on God's relation to human conflict? Any conclusion that might be drawn other than that the material is confusing and contradictory, would be just a guess. It is most probable that the confusion is due to many factors, none of which can be pointed out with certainty. It is possibly due in part to the sanctity that has surrounded the Bible for generations, to attempts at educational expediency, to the lack of an integrated philosophy of religion

[64] 2–6, Part II, p. 38.
[65] 2–7, Part I, p. 38.
[66] 7–7, p. 209.
[67] 7–5, p. 16.
[68] 3–5, p. 34.
[69] 1–13, pp. 191 and 196; 1–14, p. 69.

on the part of individual writers and of courage to present it, and many other causes.

Children are enjoined to love God and their fellow men. More space is given to such generalities as "Love your neighbor as yourself" and "Love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind" than to any other type of material. It cannot possibly be represented adequately by quotation or reference, so only a very few will be given. Two generalizations may be made. In one or two texts there is a clear differentiation made between loving God and loving our fellow creatures. The command to love God takes precedence over all others.[70] In most texts there is generally an implicit identification of the two.[71] There is much made of the generalized idealism found in Leigh Hunt's poem, "Abou Ben Adhem." In this classic, the name of "one who loves his fellow men" leads all the names of "those who love the Lord." Comparatively few concrete situations from child life are used in presenting this teaching, preference being given to such stories as "The Happy Prince," Jesus washing his disciples' feet, the curing of Naaman, the leper, and the like.[72] The Scribner's and the Pilgrim Press Supplementary texts and a few other isolated texts make a definite attempt to use materials more nearly related to the modern child's experience.

Within this setting of love to God and man, many virtues receive attention, such as, helping father and mother in the home; being sweet tempered; being happy and cheerful; using clean language; being generous toward God and man; being pure and clean in God's house; speaking the truth without fear; standing for one's convictions in the face of opposition; being strong and brave; playing fair; being meek and gentle; being content with what we have; praying to God and worshiping Him; being trustworthy, grateful, loyal, temperate, etc. The prevalence of this type of teaching is so well known that no references need be given. But one point that needs to be emphasized is the generalized character of this teaching. The bulk of it amounts to simply urging children to be good. This statement does not apply in the same degree to the Scribner's and Pilgrim Press Supplementary texts. These give children an exceptional amount

[70] 2–6, p. 17.
[71] 2–9, p. 117; 3–2, p. 70; 7–2, pp. 88–89.
[72] 2–2, p. 215; 2–3, p. 171; 2–4, p. 162; 6–2, p. 64.

of concrete material for moral guidance, particularly such texts as Miss Perkins' *At School with the Great Teacher.*

Mention should also be made of the duty of going to church and of being active church members. This emphasis is practically confined to the Christian Nurture Series. Other texts offer occasional appeals to attend God's house, but scarcely any emphasis on church discipline.

It is necessary to coöperate with God in carrying out His purposes. There is a hearty agreement upon the need of coöperating with God among all writers who discuss the subject, but there is a decided difference of opinion on the significance of this cooperation. In all primary texts, for example, children are always urged to help God care for the birds and flowers. Planting and caring for bulbs, feeding pets, and similar activities are urged as exercise in this coöperation. In this and similar material for the more advanced grades, no question is raised as to the relation of this necessity to the teaching that God is the keeper and provider of all creatures, which has already been discussed. The impression given is that we should help God because God wants us to help, and not because God could not provide for His creatures without such help. This is the manner in which the subject is most frequently discussed, or, it would be more correct to say, dismissed.[73]

One author expressed the view that God's work is unfinished if we each do not do our part.[74] Another, that God's work for anyone is dependent upon what other people do, and that only when people put God's kingdom first will we have a world in which children are cared for as the lilies.[75] The most emphatic presentation of this teaching is found in *At School with the Great Teacher,* a Pilgrim Press week-day text. This statement is of such exceptional nature that it is quoted here in full:

> God does not answer prayers just because we ask Him for things. He knows what is best for us before we ask, but there are some things He cannot do without our help. Making friends happy is one of them. We may pray, 'Please, God, make mother happy,' but if we do something to make her unhappy you see God cannot answer that prayer. It is when we say, 'Please, God, make mother happy,' and then try to please her that we have answers to our prayers at once. We cannot say, 'Please, God, feed all the Armenian children,' and then forget about them and expect God will answer that prayer. He depends on people to plant seeds and plow,

[73] 2–1, p. 176; 2–2, p. 125. [74] 5–8. [75] 3–2, p. 44; 7–6, p. 81.

and grind the wheat into flour, and others to buy it and send it on ships to those who need it.

When the Japanese earthquake came, people all over the United States prayed, 'Please, God, help the poor Japanese.' God could help that prayer quickly because the very ones who prayed gave money and food and clothes and asked others to do the same, and soon great shiploads of supplies were sailing towards Japan. God wanted the Japanese to be helped, but His children had to want it too. . . . God can do anything *if* His children want what he wants hard enough to help him.[76]

Nowhere else is this teaching so explicity expressed and nowhere else is the idea of God's limitation so emphatically presented as in this text.

(6) *God's treatment of the wayward.*

God extends mercy and forgiveness to wrongdoers without reservation if they be really desirous of mending their ways. He treats all much better than they deserve. He is always ready to give men another chance. He loves them even when they do wrong. He makes over lives that have been marred. He is "unwilling to destroy where the least traces of goodness are to be found." "He never deserts any of His children even if they have brought upon themselves the trouble they are in." This can be confidently presented as a fundamental position in all the curricula examined.[77]

There is a decided contrast between the above and the instances of God's dire judgment upon individuals and nations cited in scripture passages used. God's punishment of the Egyptians with plagues and death and the slaying of all people by the flood, except the favored family of Noah, are so frequently used that they must be regarded as favorite passages.[78] In some cases all references to the destruction caused by the flood are omitted.[79] The Israelites were exiled from their native land because of their sin, and they were repeatedly threatened with disaster if they did not mend their ways.[80] Moses was punished to the extent of being prematurely cut off from the earth because he struck the water from the rock instead of speaking to the rock as God commanded him.[81] An attendant is struck dead for

[76] 6–3, p. 79.
[77] 1–10, p. 101; 7–4, p. 10.
[78] 1–10; 7–7, pp. 17 and 18; 2–1, p. 81; 2–3, pp. 231 and 232; 2–5.
[79] 2–5, p. 55; 2–9, p. 180; 5–1, Lesson 5.
[80] 2–9, p. 155; 1–10, Lesson on Amos.
[81] 2–5, p. 46.

placing his hand upon the ark of the covenant.[82] Gehazi is punished with leprosy for covetousness.[83] Ananias dies at the feet of the apostles for covetousness.[84] The prophet Haggai is quoted as saying, "Your very misfortunes are signs of God's displeasure" without being contradicted.[85] We are obliged to conclude that the people "done to death" in this manner were really hopeless cases. An interesting fact is that this teaching is nowhere applied to modern times, which may indicate that the writers were pretty much at the mercy of the materials with which they had to deal.

A specific refutation of the idea that misfortune is a sign of God's displeasure is found in Hunting's *The Story of Our Bible*, a text in the Scribner's series. He points out that Jesus, and even Job, abandoned this doctrine.[86] The Beacon lessons, Scribner's texts, and the Constructive Studies attempt by occasional statement to prevent children from getting the impression that God slays the innocent, or even the wicked; but to offer such a refutation whenever the nature of the materials call for it would be too much like discrediting the Bible altogether.

Among all the references to punishment no mention of hell or a devil has been discovered. Yet the tragic facts of nature and the ills of society are not explained. The ancient explanation of evil has disappeared entirely, without any serious revision of theology. There is consequently an area of life in terms of which God has to be interpreted anew.

(7) *Those who live up to God's approved standards of faith and conduct are rewarded.*

In the discussion of rewards, eternal life receives outstanding attention. Death is the open door to a more glorious life, and in one or two cases even death was not necessary for the full realization of eternal life. The following quotations illustrate the teaching:

> Herod had power to destroy the body of his prisoner [John the Baptist], but the destruction of the body only hastened the triumphant entrance of this servant of God into the house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. Think how glorious must have been the experiences of the faithful prophet when the gates of Heaven opened for him, and he received his reward which is prepared for those who overcome."[87]

[82] 2–7, Part I, p. 38.
[83] 2–7, Part II, p. 46; 7–4, p. 35.
[84] 1–16, p. 54.
[85] 2–9, p. 161.
[86] 7–9, pp. 257 and 258.
[87] 2–8, Part I, p. 38.

Those who are true to God shall receive the crown of life.[88]

Our memory text shows that it is possible for people to be 'rich' in Heaven, and it is probable that there are many very rich people there who were poor while on earth.[89]

Those who give to the Lord are laying up treasures in Heaven.

The child can early understand that in baptism he was received in a special way into God's family, that God is surrounding him with help to persevere, and that He promised him a life in Heaven with Himself.[90]

Elijah was taken to Heaven as Enoch was, without dying. . . . It seems fitting that a life so strong as his, so full of stormy energy, burning so brightly, with a righteous purpose, should disappear from sight in the grandeur of a storm.[91]

The impression is given in some of the texts that material prosperity is one of God's rewards. God gave Abraham considerable property in return for his obedience.[92] David's "attainment of a kingdom and a capital" is offered to teach "a sense of the value to be found in walking with God."[93] One writer says that righteousness will not always bring deliverance from affliction, but that righteousness helps toward material prosperity.[94]

Many rewards are promised, but apart from those mentioned it is difficult to determine just what they are. The most frequent type of statement on this question which was found is of such vague and general character as the following:

It shall be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked.
Self-sacrifice in God's service brings the highest rewards.
Blessings of many kinds come to those who love the Lord.

In some of the material there seems to be an implicit assumption that righteousness is its own reward, but it is scarcely ever explicitly taught. One of the clearest statements is that "We find eternal life by loving sincerely and showing it by serving those who need our love." The author of this saying hopes to make junior children understand that eternal life is not just "going to Heaven forever."[95]

(8) *He sent Jesus into the World as the Supreme Revelation of Himself.*

The extent to which Jesus is recognized as God's greatest act of intervention in human affairs may be judged from the following:

[88] 2–7, Part II, pp. 6 and 11.
[89] 2–8, Part II, p. 11.
[90] 5–4. Notes on Section II.
[91] 2–7, Part II, p. 47; 2–9, p. 115.
[92] 1–10.
[93] 5–9, Lesson 10.
[94] 7–5, p. 72.
[95] 4–3.

The titles by which He is most commonly known. He is "the Son of God," "God's only Son," "God's own Child," "Son of the Most High," "Our Lord," "The little Lord Jesus," "Saviour of Mankind," "Redeemer," "Tender Shepherd," "Prince of Peace," "Messiah," and "Physician of Souls." [96] Titles expressive of the sonship and lordship of Jesus are by far the most commonly used.

Affirmations of His divinity. The divinity of Jesus is always assumed and never discussed as a problem. Such slight modifications of the traditional faith as appear are not the sort that would raise questions concerning the more universal emphasis. These slight intrusions of modernism will be referred to in the following paragraphs. All the materials on the subject of Jesus' divinity, apart from comments on the gospel narratives, consist of brief but frequent references to His sonship,[97] to His divine mission, which receives unusual emphasis,[98] and to His kingship.[99] The more specific statements are typified by the following:

> No fairminded reader [of the Revelation of St. John] could fail to believe in Him [Jesus] as divine.[100]
>
> Jesus was able to do this [miracle] because he was the son of God.[101]
>
> Of all things the eye can see, the most like Jesus is the sun. The sun is quite alone in the world . . . no rivals, no helpers has he . . . all light is in and from the sun.[102]

The last quotation is very characteristic of the estimate of Jesus found in the Christian Nurture texts, particularly in the texts for the sixth and seventh grades dealing with church worship and the Christian seasons.[103]

The treatment of the narratives dealing with the birth and death of Jesus. The accounts of the birth of Jesus found in Matthew and Luke which are considered legendary by all scholars of repute are most frequently presented as any historical event might be presented. This is true of all text series, and of nearly all primary textbooks. This does not mean that the in-

[96] 2–2, pp. 68 and 71; 1–5, p. 135; 2–4, p. 175; 4–2, Series III; 1–16, pp. 25 and 261; 7–9, pp. 86, 91, and 102.
[97] 1–16, pp. 89 and 316; 1–15, p. 221; 7–8, p. 156; 5–7 and 5–8.
[98] 6–3, pp. 59 and 62; 1–1, p. 221; 1–15, pp. 75–76; 7–9, pp. 30 and 45.
[99] 2–3, p. 88; 5–9, L. 5; 5–7 and 5–8.
[100] 7–9, pp. 93–94.
[101] 2–3, p. 143.
[102] 5–8, L. 24.
[103] 5–7; 5–8.

tention is to teach these stories as being true to history. They are told as stories without reference to the historic problem. It might be supposed that the first evidences of modernism might appear in connection with these narratives. This is, however, not the case. Similar stories from the Old Testament would be treated with much more daring. An attempt is made in Gates' *Life of Jesus,* a text for juniors, to lead the child to appreciate these narratives as poetry of rare beauty, the purpose of which was to teach a religious truth and not record historical events. The nearest to a direct statement of what the truth might be is that the narratives tell of "some terrestrial commotion over a celestial event, of highest consequence to man." [104]

One of the contributors to the Scribner's series admits that the historicity of the stories has recently been questioned, but regards the matter as unsettled.[105] No criticism of more far-reaching character than these has anywhere been noted. On the other hand, the widespread emphasis upon Jesus as "God's only Son," and "God's greatest Gift" tends to induce the reader to accept the nativity narratives on their face value. More thoroughgoing contributions on the subject of Jesus from biblical scholars are found in one or two texts for older children, but these do not come under the purview of this study.

The death of Jesus is never regarded as foul murder or even as tragically unjust. Liberal writers pass by the horror of it, while the more conservative contributors see in it the fulfillment of a divine purpose in which Jesus shared. Death was necessary. The tragic character of it is not dwelt upon because death becomes a mere incident when seen in the light of the glorious triumph of the resurrection.[106] Nowhere in these materials is there a denial of the gospel claim that Jesus was restored to life. Occasionally a statement is made that gives promise of a new treatment of the subject, but always the context reveals that no noticeable departure from the traditions was intended. For example, one author states that "They killed His body, but not His spirit," and then goes on to recount the story of the empty tomb.[107] Even the conflicting accounts of the resurrection in the gospels are overlooked except in one or two instances. Hunting,

[104] 4–3, *Nativity Stories.*
[105] 7–9, p. 50.
[106] 1–15, pp. 165, 199, 219; 1–16, p. 146; 2–4, p. 175; 6–3, p. 156.
[107] 6–3, p. 156.

in *The Story of Our Bible,* notes the discrepancies in the narratives, and then refers to Mark's account as the most reliable and as most "inspiring." That the story is essentially of legendary character no one has dared to suggest.[108]

The story of the ascension of Jesus to Heaven before the eyes of many witnesses is frequently omitted, but occurs again and again in the Abingdon, International, and Christian Nurture series.[109]

Belief in His moral perfection. The childhood of Jesus, of which exceedingly little is known, is referred to in all series as though the writers were acquainted with many of the details of His younger days. The information they presented about the Boy Jesus reveals a character of most exemplary beauty. He is to all boys and girls the supreme example of loving obedience.[110] He gave evidence of most remarkable intelligence and piety.[111] These generalities are not sufficient for some of the writers. They present the details of His relations with His father and mother, often without admitting the imaginative character of the material. The following, though unusually elaborate, characterizes much of this teaching accurately:

> Not any weary wounded dove
> Or small dog, homeless in the rain,
> Or frightened hare, or fluttering wren,
> Could need His help in vain.[112]

This goodness continued throughout the entire life of Jesus. Though tempted frequently, He remained sinless.[113]

The extraordinary character of His achievements. The picture of Jesus given in Sunday school literature is no less that of a wonder-worker than of an ethical genius. He heals the sick and restores the insane to normalcy.[114] He exercises control over the natural elements.[115] He feeds a multitude from a small boy's lunch basket.[116] He restores the dead to life. In-

[108] 7–9, pp. 41–42. See also 1–16, pp. 27, 33, 97, 118, 316; 7–8, p. 22; 1–12, p. 134-136; 1–13, p. 203.
[109] 1–15, p. 219; 1–16, pp. 28, 37, 316; 5–7 and 5–8; any series of Primary Texts.
[110] 5–1; 1–13, pp. 28–34, 86.
[111] 1–13, pp. 35–36; 7–2, p. 5.
[112] 6–3, p. 102.
[113] 5–1, Sec. V; 1–13, p. 203; 5–7; 5–8.
[114] 1–13, pp. 36–37, 45; 1–15, pp. 69, 176.
[115] 1–15, p. 130; 5–1, L. 25.
[116] 2–3, p. 132.

deed, "there was nothing that was right or kind or helpful or wonderful, that He could not do." [117] It is even stated by one author that He could have saved Himself from the cross if He had deemed it wise.[118] One text tells a story of the Boy Jesus performing miracles as a "not true" story. This is the only bit of teaching for the elementary grades that might cast any doubt upon the superhuman power of Jesus.[119]

The ultimate and final character of His teaching. Jesus was not only a prophet and a teacher. He was *the* teacher, the one who perfectly revealed the will of God.[120] The author of the following words strikes one of the dominant notes in this teaching about Jesus: "How glad we are that after a long time our Lord came and told these people and all the world *just* what God wanted them to do and know." [121]

In addition to possessing this final authority as a medium of revelation, Jesus is also the only one to whom such a commission has been given. This is implicit and frequently explicitly put in most of the Christian Nurture texts and in others. Many references previously given present adequate grounds for this statement. Texts such as Gates' *Heroes of the Faith* give a similar impression. The religion of Jesus is the only true religion. The Unitarian texts make room for "other saviours" and give a place to Buddha and other founders of religions. Yet in these Jesus so transcends all others that the modification of the traditional point of view is not very impressive. Such recent texts as Sailer's *What Does Christ Expect of Young People of To-day?* and Perkins' *At School With the Great Teacher* show clearly that Jesus is still taught as the one Lord and Master.

Certain other characteristics of the teaching about Jesus are greater factors in emphasizing the finality of His gospel than specific statements could possibly be. First, Jesus is always the norm. His thoughts and acts and wishes are sufficient reason for recommending certain forms of conduct. Then again, He is not only to be copied, He is to be obeyed.[122] His teaching, therefore, constitutes an appendix to, or a revised edition of, the Ten

[117] 2–3, p. 143.
[118] 2–4, p. 175. See also 6–3, p. 98.
[119] 3–2, pp. 29–30.
[120] 1–14, p. 178; 7–7, p. 50.
[121] 5–7. General emphasis in this text.
[122] 1–5, p. 26; 2–3, p. 159; 6–3, pp. 106–9. See also 4–2; 7–2.

Commandments. Nowhere in all the material studied is there any suggestion that the life of Jesus should be studied with ethical discrimination. Nothing even remotely suggestive of the daring ethical and intellectual freedom which characterized Jesus' relations with the institutions and customs of His time is ever encouraged. The greatest questions of life are answered and Jesus answered them. He is, therefore, to be studied and obeyed. The inescapable impression upon a reader of these texts is that Jesus' teaching contains rules of living. The content of this teaching is, however, summed up in a few general principles, such as, the golden rule and the two greatest commandments in the law which cannot be conceived of as a code of law without specific interpretation.[123]

Another emphasis in this teaching is that Jesus founded God's kingdom on earth which is to grow and grow until God's will is done on earth as it is in Heaven, which adds to His prestige as the "Appointed One." This is particularly true when we couple this teaching with the belief that He now sits on God's right hand,[124] working for the final descent of the New Jerusalem from Heaven.[125]

Perhaps the greatest evidence of the final and ultimate character of His mission is seen in the relations with Him which men experience at the present time. These relations are decidedly like those enjoyed by mortal man with his God. First of all, He is petitioned for guidance and strength in moral struggle, and children are assured that such petitions will not go unanswered. Occasionally He is asked for protection from danger.[126] The terms, "One with God is a majority" and "I am more than conqueror through Christ," both of which are often used, represent identical experiences. In addition to this, Jesus, though invisible, is everywhere present with His followers, as expressed by one author in the following words: "We cannot see our Saviour standing there beside the font but we know that He is there with us to bless our babies." [127]

Jesus is never asked for "a fine day for the picnic" as God is sometimes asked. He is never spoken to as the Creator of

[123] 1–13, p. 145.
[124] 1–15, pp. 75–76; 1–16, pp. 37, 97; 7–9.
[125] 1–16, p. 232.
[126] 1–1, p. 144. See any Primary text series.
[127] 5–1, Sec. VII.

the world. But, otherwise, He is God and very God. Even unlimited power is ascribed to Him. He not only represents or reveals God, He is God. The outstanding difference between this God Jesus and the God known in Sunday school literature just as "God" is that Jesus is more consistently ethical, while the other is represented as participating in conduct that is at least most questionable. How the Protestant churches, professing monotheism, can find a place for both Jesus and Jehovah is a question for theologians and psychologists.

B. The Idea of God in Services of Worship

It is now necessary to investigate the contents of worship material in common use in Protestant schools of religion, for no other type of teaching material could be supposed to be so intimately and directly concerned with the idea of God. Seventy-five services were selected at random from city, suburban, and rural churches of various denominations. They represent the type of service most frequently used in the neighborhood of New York City, but do not include services from the most extreme fundamentalist or modernist groups. They will, however, serve the purposes of analysis and of comparison with other teaching materials. Fifty of these services were personally attended, the other twenty-five were taken from written programs which were actually used, or written up on request and used later. All references to God appearing in these services are given below in as nearly literal form as possible. Occasional statements of involved character have been abbreviated. References are presented in the order of frequency with which they appeared. Those appearing with approximately the same frequency are listed together. These ideas and phrases were gathered from prayers, readings, and hymns without differentiation as to sources.

I. NAMES AND TITLES

The following names and titles are used in referring to or addressing God:

Father	Jehovah
Heavenly Father	Father, Son and Holy Ghost

Lord of Heaven and earth and sea
Lord God Almighty
Lord of Hosts
Father of All
Almighty Father
King Eternal
Almighty King
The Most High God
God of Love
Creator
King of Love
Shepherd
God of Glory
The God of my Salvation
Friend
Loving Father
Everlasting Father

II. GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

God is thought of as dwelling

In Heaven
In Heaven above
In the church, "In God's House," or "His Holy Temple"
God is everywhere
In human hearts
God is closer than breathing, nearer than hand or foot
Where love is, God is
Above the sky

III. HOW GOD REVEALS HIMSELF

God reveals Himself or communicates with man through:

Angels
The Holy Spirit
Jesus
Nature
Jesus only
Human aspiration

IV. GOD'S CHARACTER AND HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE AFFAIRS OF MAN AND THE UNIVERSE

God has given us the world in which we live, and every good thing in it—food and drink, good times, father and mother, rain and snow, birds and sunshine, free education, money, and luxury, etc. (This is the emphasis most commonly found in services of worship.)

He cares for the little birds and flowers.
God loves all people.
He hears and listens to praise and prayer.
He gives men moral strength and guidance.
His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

He guards little children night and day.
He gives us the gift of health, and otherwise cares for our physical well-being.

He forgives all our sins.

He will prosper the nation that fears Him.

His truth endureth forever.
All that happens is by His hand.

He is all powerful.
He governs the affairs of men.
He keeps His promises.
He suffers with suffering humanity.
He gave His only Son to die on the cross that whosoever should believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.

V. THE CONDUCT GOD DESIRES OR APPROVES

He wants us "to give money ungrudgingly." "To give our pennies to His work." "He loveth a cheerful giver."

To be "faithful and loving," "kind and true," etc.

To praise Him.

To love and serve our fellow men.
To preach the gospel to all the world.

To have a childlike faith in Him.
To obey and honor our parents.
To give God thanks.
To obey God.

To be pure and honest.

God desires righteousness above all things.
He wants us to bless and forgive those who persecute us.
To live justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.
To love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and our neighbors as ourselves.
To love Him by loving our fellows.
By loving those who are sick and in prison, we are loving God.

To keep the peace at home and in the church.
To prove that we are all sons of God by loving our brothers sincerely.
To show our appreciation of God's love by living a life of love.
To love friend and foe.
To obey because obedience is the essence of love.
To love, honor and adore Him.
To help lonely children by becoming their friends.

Life was given by God that we might use it for others.
To walk in the light.

To believe in the name of Jesus.

To trust God when we are afraid.

To obey God rather than men.

To keep the commandments of Jesus.

To have faith in God, for those who wrought wonders in God's name wrought by faith. (Ref., Hebrews: Chap. 11.)

To help God do the things He cannot do alone.

To help the weak and the tempted.

To do our duty.

To keep our tempers.

To overcome laziness.

To be honest and useful.

To give our lives to Jesus.

To be clean in heart.

To be reverent.
To pray for children whose mothers are not Christian.
To be self-reliant.

To give gifts to Jesus as the wise men did.

To help the church. [Specific suggestions for helping the church are to help place chairs and hymn books and to give pennies.]

To help our community. [The only specific teaching intended to develop community-mindedness is contained in a story which tells of a boy who voluntarily rolled a stone from off the street and found a box of gold coins underneath it.]

God desires peace among the nations. [This was the theme of the only carefully worked out service studied. It was connected with a prolonged study of racial and international strife by the children. The service contributed bits of literature from the classics of other races, and supplied facts calculated to stimulate respect for social and racial groups less frequently appreciated in America.]

VI. JESUS' RELATION TO GOD THE FATHER, AS REVEALED IN:

1. *The titles by which He is known or addressed.*

Son of God; Son of the Most High, etc.

King
Master
The only true way
The great Friend

The Messiah

The Christ of God
Master of Earth and Heaven
Ruler of all Nations
Saviour of the World
The Man of Love
Gentle Shepherd

Son of God and Man
Light of the World
The Comforter
Divine Saviour
Our Leader

2. *References to His heavenly habitation.*

He came from above.

Looks down from the sky.

Sits on God's right hand.

He rose from the grave and ascended into Heaven.
He will come to the world again.
He can be with us all day.

3. *In His nature and activity.*

He died to save us.
He loves all little boys and girls.

He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever.
He is alive forevermore.
He is the only way of salvation.
He bears all our sins and griefs.
He is constantly knocking at the doors of our hearts waiting to be admitted.
He helps us to be kind and happy.
He is our friend, if we do as He commands.
He will save us if we believe in Him.
He hears our prayers. [Eleven of the prayers studied were addressed to Jesus.]

4. *What He wants us to do:*

He wants us to follow Him.

What we do to our neighbors, we do to Jesus.

One short series of services given in a community school of religion presents Him as a normal boy, with an unusually stimulating religious heritage, who had to learn how to be the Messiah. This is the only reference to Jesus found that in any way smacks of modernism.

Ideas of God found in worship services are so like the teaching of textbooks that separate discussion is unnecessary. One or two generalizations can be made.

First, special attention is called to the impoverished character

of the worship materials from the standpoint of ideas. Nearly all references to God are of such vague and general nature as to be almost meaningless, particularly when it is a known fact that few of the terms used have any generally accepted content. A statement such as "'God is all-powerful, and can do anything" has definite meaning if intended to be taken without qualification. But elaborations of the idea in curricula already considered show that this is not always the case. Statements such as the "God of my salvation," "Prince of Peace," and "God of love," are very much more in need of definition. Generalizations are particularly obscure when they refer to the conduct which God requires. The major part of these statements urges children to be "good and kind," "gentle and loving," to "love righteousness," "to believe in the name of Jesus," "to give ourselves to Jesus," to "walk in the light," to use their lives in the service of others, etc. The specific meanings of such cover terms are certainly not determined by these worship services.

Attention should be called on the other hand to the statements of more specific character that appear frequently. The one receiving the greatest attention is that "God has provided us with all the luxuries, comforts, necessities, and joys of life, such as, food, rain, and snow, father and mother, birds, and sunshine." The next statement most frequently met with is that God wants children to give money to the church. The great social issues which involve the ethical standards of traditional Christianity and which could be used to give specific meaning to Christian ethics are almost entirely overlooked, exception to this statement being necessary only with two of the services studied. The preponderance of vague generalities cannot be accidental.

Secondly, the absence of educational aims of a definite sort is characteristic of ninety per cent of these services. Such themes as are used cover extremely wide areas. As a rule, services are unrelated to the other activities of the school. Only two cases were found where the service was intended to give added support to the particular teaching of the day. Apparently the idea that worship is preliminary to class work, and not specifically connected with it, still holds to a surprising degree.

Thirdly, fewer ideas of questionable moral worth appear in these services of worship than appear in the curricula reviewed. Whatever may be the worth of current worship, it can be re-

garded as being decidedly less harmful than much of the materials recommended for classroom teaching. Less can be said for them, however, when studied in the light of proven fact and of modern standards of thought.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEA OF GOD IN SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHING MATERIALS (*Continued*)

A Critical Analysis

In the last chapter the concepts of God found in textbooks and in worship services were gathered together under appropriate heads primarily as an exhibit of the actual contents of the teaching on the subject of God. The present chapter brings to light several important facts about this content, not easily seen without painstaking study of the foregoing description, and some additional material.

I. THE TEACHING ON GOD AS A SYSTEM OF THOUGHT

There is little evidence of any intention on the part of textbook writers or compilers and editors of textbook series to treat the subject under discussion systematically. One set of texts, namely, the Christian Nurture Series, stands out as the exception. The traditional system of Christian theology is outlined in the primary texts and is maintained in the forefront of attention throughout this series, increasingly amplified, but never added to. The very titles of the texts keep God in the forefront of attention. It is not the purpose here to evaluate this teaching as a system, but merely to notice the attempt to focus all thoughts upon God, and to relate such thoughts to one another. No similar attempt has been found in any of the other series.

Nowhere in all the materials read was any effort observed to relate the church's knowledge of God to life as a whole. The outstanding omission is a frank facing of the problem of evil. The current concepts of God grew from a theological system in which the devil had a respected place. He partly explained the hard side of life. But the devil has disappeared. There is not a mention of him anywhere. Yet there has been no attempt to explain a God who is not accountable for evil in the light of

the unpleasant facts of life. On the contrary, the one-sided treatment of life is evidence of a belief that children should be protected from these hard facts. The most that is said is that God does not take pleasure in the slaying of the innocent, or even of the wicked, and that we can use tragedy and suffering to good purpose. There is no explanation of how tragedy and suffering fits into the schemes of an all-good and all-powerful God.

II. PROTESTANT TEACHING ON THE SUBJECT OF GOD MAY BE CHARACTERIZED AS A CONFUSION OF INCOMPATIBLE AND CONTRADICTORY IDEAS

It has been pointed out that all curricula are in substantial agreement in so far as generalities are concerned. Presuppositions, such as, God's perfect goodness, His loving regard for men, His self-revelation, the intimacy of His presence, and His considerate provisions for the future are common to all Sunday school lesson systems. The same is true of teaching on the conduct of which God approves. Lists of abstract virtues, such as, obedience, honesty, truthfulness, trustworthiness, and brotherly love, are found in all texts. Divergencies in thought appear, however, when specific interpretations of these generalities are offered or when conduct is discussed with reference to specific moral problems. The various and incompatible ways in which God is said to reveal Himself to men, ranging from the normal functioning of conscience to dreams, miracles, and visions, may be cited as examples. The meaning of such a generalized ideal as brotherly love is made equally difficult to see when an outstanding issue such as war, now facing society, is discussed. Contradictions on these issues were specifically pointed out in the previous chapter and do not need repetition. The disclosure of inconsistencies of this sort will, however, be of little value unless their sources, as well as their nature, be specifically determined. Whence does inconsistency arise?

Is it due to the fact that the materials here analyzed were gathered from textbooks used by various denominations? Denominational differences account for varying emphases. For example, the Christian Nurture Series is characterized by an emphasis upon the doctrine of the Trinity and upon participation in the sacraments and church discipline as essential to a

full experience of God, while other publications lay little stress upon these. Unitarian literature is, of course, unitarian. The contrast between these two in the matter of ideas is the greatest that can be drawn between the teaching materials of any two denominations or textbook series. No one series has a monopoly on either scholarly biblical interpretation or upon inspiring ethical teaching. No matter what standards are used one series might be found preferable to another, yet it would be extremely difficult to show conclusively that the God in one is more intelligently or ethically conceived of than the God in another. Such variations as occur are nearly all divergences in emphases rather than contradictory positions. A significant fact is that comparatively little current Protestant literature is strictly denominational. The Scribner's and Constructive texts are nondenominational. The Abingdon texts, though published under Methodist auspices, are intended for use in all Protestant churches, and particularly in community week-day schools of religion, and are made up of the contributions of men and women of different denominations. The International Graded Lessons are basically interdenominational. The Pilgrim Press week-day series is Congregational, but is intended to supplement the International Graded Lessons. Religious education literature really represents an extensive attempt on the part of Protestant churches to cooperate in teaching religion and indicates that there is no great consciousness of far-reaching differences of opinion. In addition to this, nondenominational schools for the training of teachers of religion, such as, those at Chicago University, Union Theological Seminary, and Teachers College in Columbia University, are serving the needs of all Protestant denominations, and are turning out teachers who use the literature of nondenominational publishers freely without inquiring whether contributors are Methodist, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian. An attempt was made to trace differences to contributors with different denominational backgrounds but it proved a barren search. Ideas of God cannot possibly be clearly differentiated in denominational terms. More basic causes of confusion must be looked for.

Is the trouble therefore due to an exemplary toleration of differences of opinion? A comparison of the texts prepared by different contributors to the various lesson systems leads one to the conclusion that differences of opinion are to some extent

desired by the editors, and that a major source of our difficulty is the divergent views of individual contributors. The texts prepared by Josephine Baldwin and by Milton S. Littlefield for the International Graded Lessons may be consulted to bear out the truth of this statement. The contrast between texts prepared by Hunting for the Abingdon Press and those by almost any of the other contributors in this series is striking, particularly in the treatment of Bible narratives. Gates' interpretation of eternal life in his *Life of Jesus* (Constructive Studies) is entirely unique. But is this inclusion of diverse points of view due to a desire for toleration? Or is it an attempt to serve the needs of various schools of theology within all denominations? Or is it more likely a matter of necessity? The manner in which ideas of God are presented to children, which is discussed later in this chapter, would indicate that at any rate it is not the intention to capitalize the conflicting nature of teaching materials by the adoption of a method consistent with it.

Are individual contributors reasonably consistent? Some authors at least lay themselves open to the charge of inconsistency. In the text, *Stories from Olden Times,* of the International Lessons, God is presented as exercising a most long-suffering patience with the murderer Cain, but in a later lesson the prophet Moses is removed from the honored post of leading his people to the promised land, and even denied continued existence upon earth because he struck the rock in the desert instead of speaking to it as God had commanded. God's act is commended in each case.[1] The author of *Old Testament Story,* one of the Constructive Studies, makes the following recommendation to the teacher: "Show that the Balaam story was right in the conviction it expressed that God controls human activities, and that His purposes cannot be defeated." In the same chapter he states that God does not take pleasure in the destruction of cities as indicated in many Old Testament narratives.[2] If this latter statement means that God does not use destructive forces for the accomplishing of his purposes, the contradiction is clear. This specific reference merely illustrates something that is common to nearly all writers. They portray a God who is all-controlling and altogether good and who at the same time deplores much that occurs on earth. No attempt is made to reconcile

[1] 2–5, p. 233. [2] 4–6, Chap. XI.

the two ideas. Reference has already been made to several contradictory views in regard to God's relation to war.

Many apparent inconsistencies are due to the nature of biblical and devotional materials used. Biblical narratives when taken literally teach ideas that are mutually exclusive. As illustrative of this fact the story of the prodigal son may be compared with the punishment meted out to Gehazi. Indeed, the God who is responsible for the slaying of the Egyptians along with their horses or for the conquest of Canaan is incompatible with the God of love and mercy revealed in the teachings of Jesus. The contrast between Jehovah and the God of Jesus is known to all preachers and many laymen, but in comparatively few texts is this contrast pointed out. Mention might be made of less significant discrepancies that it may be clear that we have here more than a conflict of ancient and modern ethical standards. All writers who mention the subject of God's wisdom make Him omniscient. All series make much of the leaders of Israel and never fail to emphasize the belief that they were appointed of God. Contrast with these emphases the calling and careers of Saul and Samson, both of whom turned out to be miserable failures and undeserving of God's continued support and confidence. Even Solomon who was granted the gift of wisdom proved to be particularly lacking in this gift. Devotion to the Bible, as such, is clearly one of the sources of conflict.

Biblical and devotional materials lead even the most liberal contributors into contradictory teaching. Not many writers desire, for example, to teach that God is "up in the sky." But many hymns and scripture texts, already quoted, teach that God *is* "up in the sky." Such hymns and texts occur in all series, but are more characteristic of some than of others.

The overuse of the historic method also contributes to the difficulty. For example, Soares and Hunting reveal enough of their own thinking to make it clear to an adult that they are men of unusual ethical insight and brilliance, yet in the texts they have prepared they repeatedly recite Old Testament stories carrying views of God inconsistent with their own thinking just "for what the stories have to say to us," and children are not warned against misunderstanding. At the root of this practice appears to be the fear of raising problems for children, and possibly of doing too great damage to biblical narratives. But

whatever the reason, the result is the same, namely, presenting a God whose reputation cannot be squared with His acts. We have here one of the most fruitful sources of confusion.

But is the problem explained by reference to the practices of scholars and editors? No. It would be unfair to assume that this is true. The roots of the trouble go much deeper. It is not within the scope of this study to investigate current theological thinking as a whole. But a question must be raised here. Is the situation we have been discussing not a reflection of a chaotic state of thought in Protestant pulpits? The reader is referred to two recent symposia, namely, *My Idea of God* and *Twelve Modern Apostles,* edited by J. F. Newton and Dean Inge, respectively. That there is no Protestant theology needs no proof here. It is very commonly asserted in current religious periodicals.

Professor Leuba and others pointed out years ago that Protestant theology had broken down as a system. There would be little value in reaffirming this statement now if it were not for the bearing that the fact has on teaching methods. Few will hold that intellectual consistency is not essential to a religious experience. Reisner in his *Religious Values and Intellectual Consistency* considers it a commonly held opinion among religious thinkers that such consistency among the objects carrying religious values is necessary. A study of the symposia just referred to leads to a similar conclusion. Liberal and conservative, and even Catholic, contributors all express a desire for a rational basis for religious thought. A recent writer to the *Christian Century* pleads for a new scholasticism, or at least an authoritative statement such as Harry Emerson Fosdick could write, to which young people could turn when experiencing uncertainty.[3] The difficulties that would face the churches in attempting to act upon this suggestion make the situation described in this chapter a serious one.

But some recent Sunday school literature seems to imply that differences of opinion are healthy and necessary and that what needs to be done is to give children and young people every assistance in the evaluation of the contradictory ideas that come to them in the hope that they will build up in this manner their

[3] "Wanted: a Protestant Scholasticism," by J. C. Petrie, *Christian Century,* August 8, 1928.

own consistent systems of thought.[4] When the relative nature of consistency is considered, this suggestion gives some promise of success and shows that to such writers the problem we have been facing is much less serious. The seriousness of the situation may therefore depend upon the manner in which ideas of God are presented.

III. THE PRESENTATION OF IDEAS OF GOD TO CHILDREN

The method of presentation implies a definite knowledge of God. Some lesson systems make no secret of their intention to teach *a* theology. What the child should believe is pretty definitely determined, and, in the Christian Nurture Series, adhered to closely. The Presbyterian policy is quite similar.[1] Other systems do not make such claims, but there is nevertheless no diminution of the dogmatic spirit. They represent a shift from the dogmatism of individual churches to the dogmatism of individual theologians and nontheologians of diverse beliefs. The quotations in the previous chapter show some elementary appeal to reason and experience, but conclusions are always drawn. Few vital questions are raised. Such questions as are asked concern the content of the narratives studied and not the issues this content raises. Scarcely ever are widely differing views presented without the weighing of evidence in favor of one of these. Occasional texts, such as Gates' *Life of Jesus* (Constructive Studies), urge teachers not to discourage questions or the free expression of opinion. Yet this free expression of opinion is not to become a central part of the curriculum. It is merely to be allowed, but not used.[2] As a rule questions are *never* to be raised for children. The introduction to Soares' *Heroes of Israel* illustrates this typical caution. No matter how many acute problems the narratives contain, the teacher is not to discuss them until the child himself raises them. The assumption seems to be that children in the typical Sunday school class will ask questions which arise in their minds. Such faith in the absolute freedom of children in Sunday schools would be questioned by many. In addition to this, one cannot escape the

[4] "How I Made Up My Mind on International Questions," and "Why the Church?" etc., by *The Inquiry*. Series of Social Studies by E. L. Shaver, published by Chicago University Press.

[1] Report of Committee on Sabbath School Work, General Assembly, Atlanta, Ga., May 21, 1913.

[2] 4–2, p. 26.

impression that certain assumptions are never to be questioned at all; e.g., that God did appoint the sun and all natural forces and that God's love has been proved too often to be questioned.[3] These statements represent teaching advice in the more progressive texts. The great mass of materials collected consists of dogmatic statements that leave no room for questions or, at least, do not anticipate questioning. Nowhere in elementary texts have children been frankly told of the actual controversial nature of theology. Only once is the frank admission of ignorance recommended.[4] There is nothing in the methodology of these texts that would lead children to pick and choose with discrimination. There is no evidence of a consciousness that children need to develop thought habits to this end. *This means that children are not being prepared to meet religious difficulties through reliance upon personal judgment any more than they are provided with an adequate system of thought.* Hites in *Religious Education* for August, 1926, reports a survey of the attitudes of college students to religious difficulties, and points out the unreasonableness of students in demanding absolute and certain answers to religious questions while, at the same time, they make no such demand when scientific questions are faced. May this not be the fruit of the situation here described? Is it not also a confirmation of the point here emphasized, namely, that there is an amazing amount of certainty in religious teaching?

Certain other practices tending to the evasion of issues will be of interest to those who believe religious problems should be approached in a scientific spirit. The disclosure of these practices is in any case necessary to an adequate understanding of the teaching on God in Protestant Sunday school literature.

There is, first, the *extreme use of the third person,* or the so-called historic method. The Constructive Studies excel in this. One constantly reads, "so Moses thought," "were supposed to be," "so the story says," etc., without finding any evaluation of such thoughts and sayings or any provision for having children evaluate them. Has not the method, therefore, become an instrument of evasion? [5]

Another practice of equal significance is the *representation of*

[3] 2–2, p. 22; 5–3, p. 9; 4–3, p. 31. For other indications of the discouragement of thought, see 7–9, p. 292; 3–7, pp. 89–90.

[4] 4–6.

[5] See "Old Testament Studies" in Constructive Series.

difficult passages as poetic expressions of ideas quite in keeping with modern thought. The first chapter of Genesis is a poem,[6] and so are the stories of the birth of Jesus. They were intended to be such.[7] There is a clear tendency in the Constructive and Beacon series to excuse biblical narrators in terms of poetic license. Here is a sample: "It may occasion difficulty to some readers that Joseph is presented as planning deception, and that a lying spirit is described as amongst his messengers. This is only a poetic way of teaching the existence of the overruling power of God." [8]

If any series of texts can be said to have earmarks, the Beacon texts can be identified by *the "spiritualized" interpretations of difficult stories.* Elisha saw Elijah ascend to Heaven with "his spiritual eye." [9] Moses saw a "spiritual divine fire in the bush."[10] A miracle of healing is interpreted thus: "What Peter did was to instill courage to awaken in the beggar the joy of living." [11]

Generalizations of a sweeping character also help to obscure issues. One author, after vaguely referring to the "great truth" in the "poetic" nativity stories cannot find anything more specific to represent this truth than the following: "The existence of some celestial commotion over a terrestrial event of the highest consequence to man." [12]

Sometimes the *purpose of a study seems to limit the discussion of issues.* With reference to Joseph's dream interpretations we have this: "Of course, we naturally ask how Joseph could know these things. But we can only say that it is a part of the story and our interest is in finding out just what these wonderful old tales of the heroes have to say to us." [13]

Issues are frequently postponed because they are regarded as too difficult for the grades concerned, but when one finds this excuse persisting right through the secondary grades, with the exception of a few very recent texts, we wonder whether difficulty is the real cause of postponement.

Another fact of interest is the *overemphasis of minor questions involved in a lesson with complete disregard for the fundamental issue.* A sample is the raising of questions about Jesus' curt reply

[6] 1–6, p. 25.
[7] 4–3. The Nativity Stories.
[8] 7–5, p. 27.
[9] 3–5, pp. 113–115.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 73.
[11] 3–8, p. 35.
[12] 4–3, p. 21.
[13] 4–4, p. 69.

to His mother at the wedding feast, and about the possibility of Jesus having countenanced the use of wine, while no question is raised about the historicity of the narrative.[14]

Minimizing the seriousness of the difficulty is a commonly employed means of getting out of difficulties. For instance, the feeding of the five thousand from a small boy's lunch basket, is, according to one author, not nearly so wonderful as the laws which govern the growth of seed to make food.[15]

The above is believed to be an accurate statement of the methodology inherent in the elementary texts read. Some recent texts for adolescents and adults show a definite intention to encourage the scientific spirit as essential to religious experience in the modern world. It is not yet possible to say whether this spirit will find its way into elementary texts or not. If such a new approach to religious questions is to be confined to secondary grades, it must not be overlooked that present elementary texts are not of the sort to build up the thought habits necessary for a full appreciation of the more scientific secondary school texts. Much will have to be unlearned.

IV. RECOGNITION AND USE OF SCIENTIFIC AND HISTORICAL DATA

A discussion of this subject will serve the interests of all teachers of religion no matter what their attitude toward science may be. Those who wish scientific knowledge to be incorporated in religious teaching as well as those who wish to protect children from modern thought will be in a better position to evaluate existing curricula after the following facts are taken into consideration. It might be concluded that the methodology already reviewed would indicate the absence of the scientific spirit. Nevertheless, it is necessary to raise a question regarding the scientific status of the contents of textbooks. *What place is given to scientific hypotheses and facts that may be regarded as essential to an adequate understanding of theistic teaching?*

The greatest sensitiveness to the findings of science that has been noted concerns the creation narratives in Genesis. The meagerness of the data submitted in discussions of these narratives has already been pointed out. The modifications of the biblical narratives in the International, Abingdon, and Christian Nurture series were seen to be slight, though nowhere are these

[14] 4–3, pp. 55–56.

[15] 4–2, p. 37.

narratives presented as history. Some definite scientific knowledge is volunteered in the Constructive and Scribner's texts, but these were seen to assume more knowledge on the part of children regarding the pronouncements of science on the origins of life than they themselves submit. Even these texts make no attempt to interpret the theory of evolution to children, discussions being chiefly confined to the creation of planets. We have also seen that the best contributions of this sort were placed side by side with the most traditional interpretations of miracle stories. In addition to this, mention was made of the theistic assumption found in all discussions of the facts of life. This assumption, unquestioned as it is, seriously modifies the scientific approach to the problems of life.

It was also noted that a great deal of attention was given to the study of nature. Here is a field in which the child might, indeed, make a fruitful contact with scientific thought and methods. Some of this material is untrue to fact. For example, the contention that God provides protection for birds and guides them over sea and land during migration, while no mention is made of the disasters that commonly befall them,[1] or of that tragic element inherent in life so cleverly expressed in William Beebe's *Jungle Tales.*

> This is the bird
> That caught the lizard
> That ate the wasp
> That stung the spider
> That sucked the fly
> That killed the grub,
> The son of the beetle,
> That gnawed the tree
> That fell in the storm at Kartabo.

The complete disregard for some of the outstanding facts of life leads to the conclusion that certain facts of nature are selected to support theological contentions.

The discussions on sin and misconduct call for some recognition of the laws of heredity. Nowhere in elementary texts is any knowledge of heredity given except this: "Sin having once appeared became hereditary."[2] Though high school texts are not included in this survey mention should be made of one de-

[1] *A Friendly World,* p. 26 (Abingdon).
[2] 2–5, p. 46.

voted to the subject of heredity, namely, *The Third and Fourth Generation*, by Downing, in the Constructive series. This is a thoroughgoing study of the subject, and the only one of its kind. It is so different in nature to other texts that it cannot be said to be in harmony with Protestant theistic assumptions.

What of the findings of biblical research? The contributions of Soares, Corbett, and Hunting [3] have incorporated some of the outstanding findings of historical research, and ideas more in keeping with modern thought. There is first the means by which God communicates His will to man. These have, in part, discarded the idea that God speaks face to face with man and that he communicates through dreams and visions. Yet they so frequently lapse into traditional and biblical phrases, such as, "The Word of God," "God said," and "What other signs did God give?" that it is difficult to determine what effect upon children their contributions have. Some of these reduce the channels of communication between God and man to "conscience," but here their scientific attitude comes abruptly to a standstill. No appeal is made to psychology regarding the nature of conscience. Children are left with the impression that conscience is an infallible guide. Secondly, these writers have given emphatic expression to the conviction that the Bible is a record of a growing experience of God, though this is frequently overlooked in the discussion of particular narratives that call for its recognition. The outstanding weakness in the treatment of the evolution of ideas about God is the assumption that children of to-day are in possession of the truth about God. No mention is made of the possibility of error in the writers' own views. Another fact of real importance is that the liberalism here referred to is almost entirely confined to the Old Testament. There is little hesitancy about explaining the natural causes of the plagues of Egypt,[4] but most New Testament miracles go as miracles. This suspension of the scientific attitude when Jesus is discussed can be noted in the works of individual authors. For example, Gates deals very liberally with such subjects as the giving of the Ten Commandments in *Heroes of Faith*, a Scribner's text, but in his *Life of Jesus* in the Constructive Studies he does not even question the ability of Jesus to turn water into wine. Nothing resembling the teaching of theological seminaries

[3] 4–4; 4–6; 7–9; 1–14. [4] See 4–6.

or of standard publications on the person of Christ has found its way into elementary Sunday school texts. Hunting shows the inconsistencies in the resurrection narratives, and then pins his faith on the version in the Gospel of Mark as "inspiring." [5] He occasionally questions the historicity of sayings attributed to Jesus, but only his opinion is offered as evidence. Some authors call the nativity stories and certain miracles poems. This characterizes the few departures from the traditional gospel narratives that are made. No distinction is made between the "historic Jesus" and the "legendary Christ." There is not even a hint of the difficulties biblical scholars have encountered in the study of records. A high school text, namely, the *Life of Jesus* by Florence Buck in the Beacon series stands alone in the frankness with which it deals with the gospel stories. There is nothing even nearly approaching the spirit of this book which is available for elementary grades.

But when due credit is given to the work of the scholars mentioned, there remains a mass of material containing ideas directly opposed to the views of modern scholars. Reference need only be made to the contents of the previous chapter, particularly to the sections on the manner in which God reveals His will and God's participation in human affairs. To recall the extreme nature of some of this material mention might be made of the frequent appearance of such stories as the feeding of the disheartened Elijah by the ravens, Daniel's miraculous escape from the lions and the escape of the Hebrew boys from the fiery furnace—all used as illustrations of "the Heavenly Father's care." [6] It is safe to conclude that the traditional view of the Bible still dominates Protestant teaching.

Perhaps the most noteworthy weakness in Protestant teaching, when judged from the standpoint of at least some liberals, is the omission of relevant facts on the outstanding social issues of our day and even of the frank recognition of social problems. The only emphatic contribution to the problem of injustice, for example, is in the form of a vitriolic condemnation of grafters who operate "under the law and in the name of justice." Even in this instance no facts were submitted. The consideration of the extent to which the ideals of the "Kingdom" are incorporated in our institutions and conventions is not the concern of

[5] 7–9, p. 41. [6] 2–1, *Teacher's Manual,* Part I, p. 69.

Protestant teaching for the elementary grades. Even frank admission of the existence of social issues appears with extreme rarity. Recent texts for adolescents, it will be seen later, make much of social questions and it is safe to guess that considerable teaching is going on in local churches in the interest of world peace and the harmonious adjustment of social groups which has not yet found expression in courses of study, nevertheless the fact remains that a child could be taught all the materials here reviewed without being given a sense of concern about social conditions or any of the facts necessary to a reasonable adjustment to the ills of society. Freedom of speech, the righteousness of America in her relations to other nations, the status of persons in industry, etc., are all subjects which at least some liberals, by repeated statements, are committed to study when discussing God's will for humanity, and they are subjects which cannot be treated without an appeal to facts. Notwithstanding the fact that such a position has been widely accepted among religious educators, it has yet found but insignificant expression in Sunday school literature for elementary grades. There is at present, however, a new awakening to the need here indicated which is rich with promise for the future.

V. OBSERVABLE TRENDS

Before concluding our analysis of curricula materials it is necessary to point to any new tendencies that have been observed which seem to give promise of, and perhaps direction to, future developments in the interpretation of God.

First, attention might be called to a comparatively recent movement which now gives little promise of continuance. The attempt to reinterpret the Bible in modern terms for children so as to prevent the association of ancient ideas and archaic moral standards with religion characterizes several of the texts published by Scribner's and the Chicago University Press. The limitations of these attempts have already been discussed. Certain parts of the Bible, for example, were treated liberally in terms of facts known to the modern world, but certain other parts were, for unknown reasons, left untouched. Nevertheless, the beginning was real. Anyone reading such texts as Corbett's *Old Testament Story* or Hunting's *Hebrew Life and Times* when published must have felt that before many years the major part

of the known facts in regard to the Bible would be frankly shared with children. But this promise is not being carried out. The texts just mentioned, and practically all others of similar character, have now been in circulation for several years without the appearance of new texts to carry this movement any farther. On the contrary, *the interest in Bible, as such, is on the wane.* The new texts which are appearing from day to day are less and less centered in the Bible and more and more concerned with the practical moral problems of children and the outstanding issues confronting society. This is particularly true of texts for adolescents and adults, but is not entirely confined to these. Some of these texts are less concerned with transferring standard religious ideas and beliefs to children but are more anxious to develop social attitudes. The Bible is still sometimes used in these new texts but the passages included are selected for their bearing upon some practical problem. The Chicago University Press has recently published several such texts for adolescents. Outstanding among them are the series of social studies by E. L. Shaver and *Right Living* by M. J. Neuberg. With these might be mentioned the study texts published by *The Inquiry.* Other texts, such as Edna M. Bonser's *Building the Golden Rule City,* published by Scribner's, and the Pilgrim Press Supplementary texts included in this study represent the same shift away from Bible study *per se* in the elementary grades. The report of the committee preparing the new International texts shows the same tendency. In this report, suggested materials are drawn from many sources with a view to building up certain character traits. It is obvious that one of the causes underlying this tendency is the new interest in character development which is characteristic of education as a whole. Modern educational philosophy is also beginning to dominate the teaching of religion. Also, the great crises of society, such as war, racial conflict, and industrial strife, have become sufficiently acute to demand an education which has their solution as its primary aim. Such an education calls for an experience-centered curriculum and for many more materials than the Bible contains. In addition to this, it demands that certain biblical narratives which seem to give divine sanction to war and race hatred be eliminated. This is very noticeable in the three texts of the new International series read. (These have appeared since the foregoing report was

written.) Biblical selections in these texts are exceedingly few, and those selected are in keeping with modern ethical standards. Even those used have been modified to the extent that a reader wonders if it is the Bible that is being taught at all. For example, the story of the feeding of the five thousand is a lesson on sharing with others, without any reference to the miraculous character of the incident. The boy's lunch was shared and he found joy and happiness in the privilege of sharing. The story of Jacob's dream at Bethel is also conspicuous for the absence of the vision of God and His angels in the clouds of Heaven. Even quotations from scripture are cut to remove possible misunderstanding—for example, "God so loved the world that He gave His . . . Son." [1] These new texts reveal an admirable attempt to clean house. It must not be assumed, however, that the appearance of these texts makes ineffective what has been found in the older texts. Even the old International Graded Lessons were never fully popularized. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the selling of the new ideas and particularly the absence of emphasis on the Bible, as such, will be a problem of first magnitude which will not be solved for many years to come.

There is not only a trend away from Bible study and the memorization of Bible texts but also a corresponding decrease in the number of references to God. This does not mean that authors are less godly, but that they have less faith in theological discussions as means of realizing the ends of religion. God is present, but he is largely assumed—a cosmic sanction for great moral purposing. He is on the side of goodness, beauty, and progress, but discussions and even affirmations of His almighty power and omniscience, etc., rarely appear. The reader is referred to *The Knights of Any Town, The Rest of the Family,* and *The Junior Citizen,* published by the Pilgrim Press, and to *Building the Golden Rule City* published by Scribner's, and to some of the new International texts.

Although these texts might be characterized as teaching less about God, the God implicit in their teaching is more moral and more consistently so. He is decidedly more in keeping with the God found in the teaching of Jesus contained in older texts. Old Testament narratives which represent God as participating

[1] *God's Friendly World,* pp. 23, 41, and 150.

in violent relations with men never appear. Discussions on such controversial questions as the existence of God and immortality appear with even less frequency than they do in older texts. Some of the more concrete discussions of them tend to limit His activity and to throw the child more upon his own initiative. The only attempt to formulate a system of thought on this new basis is found in Jeanette E. Perkins' text for primary children in the new International series, *God's Friendly World.* Jeanette Perkins has guessed that the difficulty lies in the basic theistic assumptions, and has consequently courageously attempted a reconstruction of these. God, to her, is not only imminent but inherent. Even the child is a part of God.

> Stand still my heart, for I am part—
> I too—of the living God.[2]

Conscience is not a means of learning about God, but God, Himself, in so "far as He can get at us." [3] The universal presence of God's loving care is taught with all the traditional fervor, but a new element of contingency appears. God works through laws, and the realization of His care depends upon enlightenment—the discovery of these laws—and upon the coöperation of individuals in obeying them. God's care is not directed to individuals, but has been made available to a coöperating society.[4] Going on this assumption the author lays particular stress upon learning the laws of health, safety in the streets, the sharing of food, eyes, and ears, etc. No doubt the comparative silence on God in the texts for older children is partly accounted for by the fact that the children are supposed to have a grounding in theistic teaching in this primary text. Looked upon in this light, the other texts are a logical continuance of Jeanette Perkins' scheme. This new emphasis brings in a two-fold modification in Christian theology, namely, a denial of what she calls "stark omnipotence," and a virtual abandonment of belief in God's unconditional care of His individual children. The new emphasis naturally raises new problems which will become more and more apparent as time goes on. For example, the statement that the destructive forces of nature are also God's [5] is not adequately woven into the rest of the teaching. It is merely acknowledged.

[2] Page 18.
[3] Page 71.
[4] Pages 47 and 49.
[5] See 29.

There is also the unhappy picture of God that this teaching will give to many. He is bound by the order He has created to look on while the innocent suffer, until He has developed sufficient goodness and wisdom in others to enlighten them.

There are also incongruities that need explanation. For example, when a child is careful in crossing the street, God is given full credit. When the child fails, the child is to take the blame. If we are to accept the idea of God's inherence, must He not share the blame, the weakness, the ignorance, or whatever it is, as well as the credit for success?

Another tendency in texts for high school pupils which may soon affect elementary religious education is seen in the improving status of the child. For the first time in Christian history the child's own judgment is appealed to. He is expected to play a major part in the process of becoming adjusted to life. The texts published by *The Inquiry* can be cited as outstanding examples. There is a possibility that elementary teaching will move in this direction also. Indeed, teacher training texts in common use give promise of such a development.[6] Any effectual utilization of the "project principle" in elementary teaching means the discarding of a dogmatic theology and an equally dogmatic morality for a project religion. The movement for securing the full and free participation of children in promoting their own education has already progressed very far in elementary "secular" schools of the progressive type. Their faith in the child's creative genius has already been amply justified by the results of experiments in the fields of art and literature.[7] A similar emphasis in religious education will mean the abandoning of the theological approach to life—that is the approach to life with unquestioned theistic assumptions. There is no evidence of this spirit in the new International texts read. Their tone is dominantly dogmatic.

All this may seem to be very much in opposition to the foregoing discussion on current methods, and it is. The reader is warned against supposing that these new tendencies have yet progressed very far. They are mere beginnings which may or may not continue. These beginnings are so elementary in char-

[6] *The Project Principle in Religious Education,* by E. L. Shaver.

[7] See publications of Lincoln School, Walden School, City and Country School. Also *Progressive Education* for April-May-June, 1926, and for January-February-March, 1927.

acter that it would be foolhardy to conclude that they clearly indicate the nature of future religious teaching. The fact is that the bulk of religious teaching is directly opposed to these new tendencies.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT DO CHILDREN THINK ABOUT GOD?

No one study can offer a satisfactory answer to the inquiry—What do children think about God? Every study is limited by the methods and instruments used, and it is only by many varying approaches to the problem that an adequate answer can be given. At the same time, each study may make a unique contribution because of its particular nature. The responses of children given in these chapters cannot be understood as beliefs which occupied the minds of children prior to the testing. The tests cover a range of ideas wider than any one child is ordinarily exposed to, though all are within the reach of, and most of them are actually believed by children. Ideas thought out or accepted by a child do, however, determine his reaction to new ideas. The results of this test, therefore, include both ideas thought out or accepted by each child plus his reaction to new ideas which he had never before encountered. The two classes of reactions are not differentiated. Two tests were used: an interview test for primary children and a true-false test for juniors and intermediates. For a discussion of the values and defects of these tests the reader is referred to the Appendix.

A. The Ideas of Children Eight Years Old and Under

An interview technique was devised for testing children of the primary grades. It was not found to be very satisfactory so only seventy-five children were actually tested. The responses of these children add little to already existing knowledge of children's ideas in so far as their general character is concerned. They may be regarded as an addition to similar material that has been accumulating for years. The test did, however, secure the responses of children to a wider range of questions than has previously been used. The method of interviewing adopted is new, and this may throw some additional light on our problem. The spontaneous expressions of children were sought, but

interviewers were also advised to raise questions for children and to discuss their own responses with them in order to discover whether or not some thought structure gave support to their ideas. These recommendations were not always followed out. Some interviewers refused to raise problems for their children, and others were apparently satisfied with generalizations that needed further analysis. Many did not secure a response from each child on every question in the test. These departures from the recommended procedure have seriously crippled this part of the experiment, but sufficiently good work was done to justify a consideration of the results.

The questions and topics presented to children for discussion are presented here together with the characteristic responses made. Many responses closely related are listed separately because of possible divergencies in meaning. The figures to the right represent numerically and graphically the frequency with which responses occurred. The suggested approach to each section also includes the actual responses of children. These were secured through preliminary interviews.

1. *To stimulate the expression of the child's idea of what God is or of what God is like.* (Number of Children Responding: 40.)

Suggested approach: Some boys and girls in New York were asked to tell what they thought God was like. One said God was a nice old man with long clothes and a white beard. Another thought God was a doctor, and another thought God was a little boy. One girl thought God was like the wind. Now what do you think God is like?

Responses	Frequency of Response
1. God is like a man with long white robes. He looks very kind.	xxxxxxx
2. God is an old man and has long white whiskers all over his face.	xxxxx
3. I just can't tell you.	xxxxx
4. God is a spirit and can get into places without being seen. I never saw Him.	xxxx
5. God is like a spirit—like that part of you which goes to Heaven when you die.	xx
6. God is a very good man.	xx
7. God is nature.	xx
8. God is a man with power who uses his power in the right way.	x
9. God is quite different from a man. He has power to create things.	x

Responses	Frequency of Response
10. God is a powerful doctor.	x
11. God has a different spirit from us. Mamma told me so.	x
12. God is a spirit. He doesn't really live, but gives you thoughts to do things to help people.	x
13. God is as big as a cloud. He wears a long dress, and a blackish beard.	x
14. Mamma has a picture of God. He has hair down to his shoulders. He is old.	x
15. God has a smiling face.	x
16. God is like us.	x
17. God is like a fairy.	x
18. God is a young man.	x
19. God is a king—the greatest king of all.	x
20. God has a head.	x
21. God is the same as Jesus.	x
22. Nobody ever saw God.	x

Apparently a great number of children did not respond at all to the question raised here. One group from a somewhat progressive Sunday school scouted the idea that God was like a man or anything else the interviewer suggested, but would not themselves offer any suggestion of what they considered a likeness of Him to be. Evidently their conception of God could not be represented adequately by anything in particular known to them. Several general trends are obvious in these responses. One is to think of God as a man with flesh and bones and whiskers. Forty per cent of the responses are of this sort. Fifteen per cent describe Him as a man, withholding further details. Twenty per cent think of Him as spirit, ghost, or fairy indicating a pronounced impression of His nonmaterialistic and unearthly character. Two think of Him as "nature," whatever they may have meant by the term. One child knew that God had a head, but nothing more. The teacher interviewing this child adds a note to the effect that a picture book which the child owned was responsible for this response. Twenty-five per cent make some reference to His kindness or goodness, and twelve per cent show a consciousness of His power. Response 12 indicates something like an identification of God with one's ethical power. No other response of this character was received, but this one suggests new possibilities in child thinking.

2. *Where is God?* (Number of children responding: 75.)

Suggested approach: Some children say God lives up in the sky, others say that He lives in the church, and some say He lives in people. Where do you think God is? (If a child says "everywhere," find out what he means by it.)

Responses	Frequency of Response
1. God is away up in the sky.	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
2. God is in Heaven.	xxxxxxxxxxxx
3. God is everywhere.	xxxxxxxxxxxx
4. God is near us all the time.	xxxxxxxxxx
5. God is down inside of me.	xxxx
6. God is in our hearts. Love is in our hearts.	xxxx
7. God is in plants and bird and trees and insects.	xx
8. God is in the air.	x
9. God is in our church.	x
10. God is in Heaven. There is no form to Heaven. It is something like clouds—changes all the time.	x
11. God lives with the Father in Heaven.	x
12. God is in Heaven, but I don't know what Heaven is like.	x
13. God is specially in Heaven, but He can be everywhere.	x
14. God has His ear all over.	x
15. God is where He can see everybody all over the world.	x
16. God lives in the hearts of people, especially in the hearts of people who come to church on Sunday.	x
17. God came through stones to the earth.	x
18. God is in this room, but we can't see Him.	x
19. God is not in the stores on Ninth Avenue.	x
20. God is on the cross. He is there all the time.	x
21. God is up in Heaven, but He comes to the world often.	x
22. I don't know where God is.	x

The greatest agreement is in the belief that God is "up in the sky." Next comes the belief that He is in Heaven. It was not recorded whether these children were unable to say where Heaven is. It is likely that interviewers were content with the response as given. If the ideas that God is near and in people's hearts are grouped together because of the idea of God's intimate presence inherent in them, they represent twenty-seven per cent of the entire group. To one child God is a glorified ear; to another He looks down on the whole world. More questioning of children making general responses no doubt would have revealed

many more ideas of this sort. One child is sure God is not in the stores where her family does its shopping. The statement that "God came through stones to the earth" is likely due to the story of the resurrection of Jesus.

3. *Why do people pray to God?* (Number of children responding: 60.)

Suggested approach: Under this topic you are to discover whether or not the child experiences any real fellowship with God, and what he considers to be the meaning and value of prayer. The following statements have come from primary children. Use them, if necessary, to stimulate discussion:

"God and I often talk and have nice times together."

"God will give us anything we ask for."

"God gives us only some of the things we ask for."

"I just say the prayers mother teaches me."

Responses	Frequency of Response
1. You can talk to God when you pray.	xxxxxxxxxxxx
2. We pray so God will be with us all the time to keep us from doing wrong.	xxxxxx
3. We don't have to talk out loud to God. He hears us just as well when we only think.	xxxxx
4. God talks to us and tells us what to do.	xxxx
5. God helps us to try harder to get the things we want.	xxxx
6. It helps to pray when you are in trouble.	xxxx
7. I pray to God because I want God to help me, and because I want to thank Him.	xxxx
8. God gives us what we ask for when we pray.	xxx
9. Praying helps you to be good.	xxx
10. God hears everything we say when we pray, even if we get in a dark closet He hears.	x
11. God hears us when we pray if we have our windows open.	x
12. Mother tells me what to say when I pray.	x
13. I pray because Mother tells me to.	x
14. Prayer is kneeling down, putting your hands under your chin, and saying your prayers.	x
15. I pray to God when I'm sick.	x
16. God forgives me when I do wrong if I ask Him.	x
17. When I do wrong I have the feeling which makes me do right. I think that is God, but I never hear Him.	x
18. Praying is like talking to mother, only I don't hear Him.	x

Responses	Frequency of Response
19. When I pray to God I ask Him to save people like fliers from France. I can hear His voice. When I do wrong, He talks to me. I talk back to Him. When I am in trouble, I pray for help and He sends it.	x
20. God answers me, but I can't hear it.	x
21. God doesn't talk to you, but He puts it in the spirit. You know what you can do and what you can get; what is good and what is bad.	x
22. It makes God happy to have us pray.	x
23. Sometimes He grants your wish.	x
24. Mother never tells me to pray, but I pray to thank Him for food and clothes.	x
25. I pray not only at bedtime, but when outdoors, I pray for no rain.	x
26. I thank God for clothing and shelter.	x
27. I talk to God, but I never hear His voice.	x
28. God doesn't wait for me to talk to Him. He tells me first sometimes, and then I talk to Him.	x
29. It is crazy to pray, because God is right there all the time.	x

The most frequent contribution on this subject was that "prayer is talking to God." Children making this response seemed unable to think of prayer in terms of results. The statement is one they had frequently heard in Sunday school. If we add to these the children who think of prayer as "sticking your hands under your chin . . ." or as a duty to be performed because "mother" asks them to do it, etc., we have twenty-five per cent of the entire group. The same number think prayer helps them to be good. Thirteen per cent of the responses are more specific, indicating that God will do anything we ask Him to do. He saves aviators from mishap, helps the sick, gives food and clothing, or controls the weather. Two children think prayer helps them get the things they want, not for the asking, but because it makes them work harder to get them. Responses 17, 19, and 21 indicate experiences of real helpfulness, though response 19 expresses an astonishing faith in God's willingness to carry out human wishes. There is a pathetic complaint on the part of several that they cannot hear God's voice, none indicating that this is not to be expected. All responses imply belief that God can hear prayers, one qualifying this belief with the statement that we should have our windows open when we pray.

This qualification is likely a reflection of the story of the exile Daniel praying beside his open window. One child thinks praying is "crazy" because "God is right there all the time." This is a unique application of God's immanent goodness, and a logical deduction from the teaching that God is all-loving, all-powerful, all-wise, and ever-present. Another child indicates an experience of the initiation of communion on the part of God Himself.

4. *How do people find out about God?* (Number of children responding: 60.)

Suggested approach: Ask the children the question of the topic. If you find it necessary to stimulate the discussion suggest some answers other children have given such as:

"Some people saw God with their eyes and He told them out loud what to do."

"God talks to people in dreams."

"The Bible tells us everything about God."

Responses	Frequency of Response
1. The Bible tells people about God.	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
2. God comes to people in dreams.	xxxxx
3. Ask the minister. He can tell you.	xxxxx
4. Father and mother tell me.	xxxx
5. Jesus tells us about God.	xxxx
6. People saw God long ago, and He told them what to do.	xxx
7. The Bible tells us some things about God.	xxx
8. We find out about God in church.	xxx
9. He puts right thoughts in our heads.	xxx
10. We learn about God in books.	xx
11. Thunder is God speaking to us.	x
12. You have to go to Heaven to find out about God.	x
13. God makes us think of Him.	x
14. God talks to you when you pray, but not out loud. It's something like a whisper.	x
15. We learned from people who lived long ago.	x
16. God gives you direct ideas through feelings.	x
17. We learn through experience with people.	x
18. We learn through the Bible and old records.	x
19. We learn of God through angels.	x
20. I wonder how people who wrote the Bible found out about God?	x
21. We are learning about God still. People go to the Holy Land and come back and tell us.	x
22. Mother read about people seeing God once, but we can't see Him. He can't come from Heaven.	x

Forty-eight per cent of these responses associate God's revelation of Himself only with the Bible, the long ago, old records, the Holy Land, and the like. Twenty-two per cent show similar dependence upon books, father and mother, the minister, or the church. Eleven per cent believe thunder, angels, or dreams serve as means of communication. A very small minority think of God as directing or inspiring human thoughts. One child thinks we learn through experience with people. One thinks God speaks in a whisper, and one is skeptical enough to say that we have to go to Heaven to find out about God. The interviewers missed a valuable opportunity in not getting under the many general statements made to see whether or not they had any supporting thought or experience. There is every indication that children have exercised little thought on this question, and this is all that could be expected from the analysis of teaching materials. Textbooks do not discuss this question directly, but assume nearly all the ideas these children expressed.

5. *On the Nature and Manner of God's Love.* (Number of children responding: 50.)

Suggested approach: Tell this story: Two boys and two girls once had an argument. One said that God loves all people in the world alike—rich people, poor people, good people, and bad people, black people, white people, foreigners, and everybody. Two of them thought that God loves only good people, and another thought that He loves Americans better than other nations. What do you think about this?

Responses	Frequency of Response
1. God loves everybody in all the world just the same.	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
2. God loves only the good people and punishes bad ones.	xxxxx
3. God can only love us if we are good. He can't if we are naughty.	xxxx
4. God's love depends on our being good.	xx
5. God loves everybody, but good people better.	xx
6. God loves white people.	xx
7. God loves us better than father and mother do.	xx
8. God tells our mother to punish us.	xx
9. God loves even the Chinese who are the opposite people. [The explanation of this was that they wrote backwards, lived on the opposite side of the world, and had "opposite customs."]	x
10. God loves us when we are good to Him.	x
11. God loves everybody except robbers.	x

Responses	Frequency of Response
12. God loves poor people a little better.	x
13. He loves good people, but He puts bad people in jail.	x
14. If people steal He won't love them.	x
15. If we are sorry for doing wrong, He will love us again. Mrs. Snyder isn't sorry so He can't love her.	x
16. God loves us like Dad does.	x
17. There is no one God loves better or worse.	x
18. God loves everybody, even bad people.	x
19. I don't know whether God cares for us or not.	x

Fifty per cent of these responses express belief in God's love for humans without qualification or condition. Thirty-two per cent believe His love depends upon goodness. One child limits his love to white people. Two think He loves all alike, but good people better. One doesn't know whether God loves us or not. Sixteen per cent of the responses volunteer the information that God punishes wrongdoing. Only one child mentions the possibility of regaining God's favor through repentance.

6. *What God does.* (Number of children responding: 75.)

Suggested approach: I wonder if you will tell me now some of the things you think God has done in the world, and is doing?

Find out if these children think God is responsible for all that happens, good and bad—if He sends earthquakes to punish people, if He saves good people from accidents, whether or not He protects children from danger at night, and whether or not He feeds and cares for all people and animals. Find out also if they consider God's powers unlimited in character.

Responses	Frequency of Response
1. God gives us food and clothing and everything we have—coal and wood and air to breathe.	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
2. The people in the flood [the Mississippi flood] were bad so God sent the flood.	xxxxxxxxxxx
3. God can see right through the roof. Or, "He can see us no matter where we are."	xxxxxxxxx
4. He saves people from drowning and accidents.	xxxxxxxx
5. God made everything there is—the world, sun, moon and stars, flowers, trees, and everything there is.	xxxxxxx
6. God sends rain and snow.	xxxxxx
7. God gets even with people by having things happen to them.	xxxxxx
8. God can see everybody in the world at one time.	xxxxx
9. He can make us well when we are sick.	xxxxx

Responses	Frequency of Response
10. He can do anything He likes.	xxxx
11. God protects all children in the world and gives them nice things.	xxxx
12. God protects us at night and sees nothing will happen to us.	xxxx
13. He sends angels to protect us.	xxxx
14. He punishes us when bad.	xxxx
15. God gave us Jesus.	xxx
16. God helps to make us good.	xxx
17. God gave us father and mother and our homes.	xxx
18. He protects us from thunder and lightning.	xx
19. He can change us into angels.	x
20. God can see us even if we have the door shut.	x
21. If you want to be bad, God can see right through you.	x
22. He can make me good even if I don't want to be.	x
23. God can give visions and messages to people.	x
24. God can do anything He wants to regardless, except unkindness.	x
25. It took God a long time to make the world. It took seven years.	x
26. He sends cyclones and earthquakes and a lot of people are killed.	x
27. He watches and writes down everything we do.	x
28. God sends babies.	x
29. God never wants people to be sick and have accidents except when He wants to punish them.	x
30. God helps us to do hard work.	x
31. God gives us furniture. [This was from a child whose parents had just bought a new living-room suite.]	x
32. God keeps us from getting sick when we get our feet wet.	x
33. He helps us to be good, if we help.	x
34. He keeps us from stealing money from father and mother.	x
35. He gives us only good times.	x
36. God helps firemen save people.	x
37. There was an auto accident in our street and a lot of people were killed. God did it.	x
38. God saves people from being killed. I know because I fell right in front of an automobile and it never touched me.	x
39. God didn't drown people in the flood. The devil did it. The devil was good once but he got bad and turned all red, and now he kills people.	x
40. The devil must have sent the flood.	x

Although the above is a collection of individual responses it represents a surprisingly consistent view of God which can be traced to traditional theological teaching. God is all-seeing and all-powerful. He is the giver of all good gifts—father, mother, food, and clothing, coal and wood, sun and moon, rain and snow, babies, and even furniture. He provides protection from danger of any sort, from any harm that might befall children at night, from thunder and lightning, automobile accidents, fire, or sickness. He can even intercept the natural consequences of getting one's feet wet. The evils that befall men are from God also, but are intended as punishment for wrongdoing. This was the commonest explanation of suffering whenever the problem was raised. The children were apparently not aware of any inconsistency between this belief and their faith in the perfect goodness of God. There are a few who dissent from this general view. One limits God's power to acts of kindness, and insists that He does not cause anyone to suffer. Another says that "He gives us only good times," and two blamed the devil for all things evil.

7. *Our final destiny.* (Number of children responding: 40.)

Suggested approach: Is this world going to go on forever and ever as it is now? What happens to people when they die? Does God punish bad people when they die? Is God ever going to make the world so good that there will be no wars; so good that people will always be kind to one another? Is God coming to the world again? etc.

Responses	Frequency of Response
1. The world will go on just as it has.	xxxxxxxxxx
2. God might come to the world again.	xxxx
3. God can't make the world better unless we help.	xxxx
4. God is going to make the world better and better until some day everybody will be happy.	xxx
5. God takes part of us to Heaven when we die.	xxx
6. When we die they bury us, but our souls go to Heaven sometimes.	xxx
7. I don't believe God will ever come.	xxx
8. I expect to live in Heaven with Jesus.	xxx
9. God comes down when people die and takes their hearts to Heaven.	x
10. The end comes when an angel comes and gets you.	x
11. God is going to come to the world some day to see if we are good.	x
12. God is going to destroy the world and take good people to Heaven. It did happen once.	x

Responses	Frequency of Response
13. He takes our souls to Heaven.	x
14. God will punish people. He is trying to make them good.	x
15. We will go to be with God if we are good, but if we swear we'll not go.	x
16. Good people go to Heaven. I don't know where the bad ones go.	x
17. When people die God takes their souls. He may make them into other people.	x
18. God can make the world new—no war, no quarreling, if people help.	x
19. God may send a flood and destroy everything.	x
20. God will forgive little things and take us to Heaven.	x
21. God punishes bad people when they die.	x

This question was raised with only forty of the children. Many interviewers did not discuss the subject with their children because of lack of time or because they considered the subject unsuitable for discussion with such young children.

Ten children think the world will go on as at present. Four see visions of a kingdom of God on earth, while five who think likewise believe this possibility is contingent upon human assistance. Four think God might come to the world again. Three deny the possibility of a "second coming." The dominant note is the belief that God will take the souls of the righteous to Heaven after death. Several children did not know the term, "soul," but substituted "part of us" or "our hearts" for the usual word. There is a single mention of punishment after death, but no reference to hell. One child wonders where the bad go when they die. One sees the possibility of the world being destroyed. A strange fact is that none suggests that God is in the world all the time.

8. *Things God wants us to do.* (Number of children responding: 52.)

Suggested approach: Ask the children what some of the very important things God wants us to do are. Get behind such generalizations as "God wants us to be kind and loving," and discover if possible what love and kindness mean to the child.

Responses	Frequency of Response
1. God wants us to be kind and good.	xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
2. He wants us to help mother with her work	xxxxxxx
3. God wants us to obey mother.	xxxxx

Responses	Frequency of Response
4. He wants us to teach bad people not to fight.	xxx
5. He doesn't want us to fight.	xxx
6. God wants us to try to make peace in the world.	xx
7. God doesn't want us ever to go to war to kill people.	xx
8. He wants us to help old people.	x
9. He wants us to fight for our country.	x
10. He wants us never to lie or steal.	x
11. He doesn't want us to fight for our country unless our country is in the right.	x
12. To be good in church.	x
13. To obey the commandments.	x
14. To be loyal to God.	x
15. Be kind to animals.	x
16. God wants us to help those who can't help themselves.	x
17. To help mother mind the baby.	x
18. To give pennies to poor people.	x
19. Give food to animals.	x
20. To play fair.	x
21. To get a report card.	x

Twenty-seven children, or fifty-one per cent, of those entering into this discussion offer only the vaguest generalities. God wants us to be good and kind, or to be loyal to God. The more specific answers concern mostly home duties, the poor, the old and unfortunate, animals, conduct in church, etc. In short, God wants them to be charitable and well-behaved. Four children associate God's will with the problem of war. Two of these are confirmed pacifists. They were questioned closely, but remained unshaken in their conviction. They disapproved of killing under any circumstance. Both had been regular attendants at a series of worship services on world peace.

9. *Jesus' relation to God.* (Number of children responding: 39.)

Suggested approach: Ask the children who they think Jesus was. If responses are not spontaneous secure their judgment upon the following statements:

"Jesus is a little boy."
"Jesus is God."
"Jesus is on the cross."

"Jesus is God's brother."
"Jesus is dead."
"Jesus is God's son."
"Jesus made everything there is."
"Jesus is always near us and caring for us."
"Jesus is president of the United States."

Responses	Frequency of Response
1. Jesus is God's son.	xxxxxxxxxxx
2. Jesus is a doctor.	xxxx
3. Jesus is God's brother.	xx
4. He is God's son. He lives in Heaven.	xx
5. He is God's son. He lives all over.	x
6. Jesus is God's son. He is always near us and cares for us.	x
7. Jesus and God and Mary and the Angels are best friends.	x
8. Jesus is a lady.	x
9. Jesus comes alive every Easter.	x
10. Jesus is the son of Mary.	x
11. Jesus and God are just like father and son.	x
12. Jesus is God's son. He is alive with God in Heaven.	x
13. Jesus is a man.	x
14. Jesus is magic.	x
15. Jesus is God's son. He looks like God.	x
16. Jesus is with us and cares for us.	x
17. Jesus is a big man up in Heaven.	x
18. He gives us nice things.	x
19. He gives us churches and our prayers.	x
20. Jesus is God's son. He helped make us.	x
21. Jesus made the snow.	x
22. Jesus saves us.	x

These responses show that little distinction is made between God and Jesus. He is God's Son to most of these children, but an examination of His present abode, and the work He is said to do will show that Father and Son really mean the same thing. "He is a big man up in Heaven." He is "all over." He is always "near and caring for us." "He gives us nice things." "He helped make us." "He saves us." Four children call Him a doctor and these are the only ones who seem to suggest an idea of His humanity. The mistaken ideas which these children have picked up are not surprising. Jesus is magic; He is God's brother; He is a lady; He is a little boy; He is president of the United States; He is still nailed to the cross; or He comes alive every Easter. The Jesus of Sunday school literature is a worker of wonders. This may account for His characterization as

"magic." Children frequently see pictures of Jesus on the cross and might therefore conclude that that is where Jesus is now. Teaching materials for very young children made much of the "Baby Jesus," why then should young children not regard Him as a child? One child confuses the celebration of Easter with the actual resurrection. To her, therefore, Jesus experiences an annual resurrection.

There are many evidences of incapacity in these responses. Some well-known generalizations could now be made. The children making these statements show a tendency to extreme anthropomorphism and to dependence upon parents, teachers, and ministers as authority for what they believe. They show the difficulties teachers encounter in giving adequate meaning to such generalizations as God because of the limited experiences of children. There are also some cruder responses which show the child's complete failure to understand. These generalizations are not new and therefore need no elaboration. But they can be subjected to analysis which may assist in the improvement of teaching.

First, textbook writers and many teachers have leaned heavily upon the assumption of the child's incapacity. The responses reviewed are frequently regarded as inevitable, and sometimes teachers are advised to teach the idea of God in extreme anthropomorphic terms because these are more in terms of the child's experience. But are they? Some of the pictures of God given here are gigantic and imaginary in the extreme. Has the child ever seen a giant? Has he ever seen anyone in the form of a head and nothing more? Many of the other responses of children reveal with certainty that they are capable of grasping more spiritual concepts in terms of their own experience. The reader is reminded that less than half of these children interpreted God in extreme terms of flesh and blood. It was the original intention to get children to draw representations of God. This was given up because of the few who expressed willingness to do this. Those who did it did not hesitate but drew pictures of human beings floating on clouds or of Jesus on the cross. Those who declined did so sometimes because they " . . . could not draw pictures that were beautiful enough," but most of them declined because they thought God could not be pictured. Once a whole group refused to give even a verbal representation of Him. But

they did not hesitate to tell what God did and what He wished them to do. Some responses are surprising in their apparent maturity. True, "spirit" is sometimes no more than a "spook" or a "fairy," but there is clear evidence of a reaching out for less materialistic views than children are generally assumed to be capable of holding. The responses given here show a surprising range of thought, which is sufficient reason for questioning the common assumption regarding the child's incapacity. On the one hand, God is a bearded old man who lives above the clouds, who communicates through a holy book, dreams, angels, and visions; who looks after the interests of those who obey Him as one possessed of power to suspend the laws of nature to their advantage; who demands certain forms of conduct upon pain of suffering and death both in this life and the life to come. On the other hand, God is likened to the human soul—"He is like that part of us which goes to Heaven when we die." He is also identified with the urge to resist temptation. He speaks by " . . . putting it in the spirit so that we know what we can get, what is good and what is bad." He is not to be seen with the eye. He is incapable of doing unkindness and even of hating the wicked. His purposes for humanity can be effectually carried out "if we help." The children interviewed cannot be classified as adhering constantly to either one of these divergent points of view, but that these two pictures of God are contained in their responses when gathered together is substantial evidence that the teaching is the primary factor. There is certainly no indication that a particular mode of reasoning, not characteristic of adults, characterizes childhood. Is it not true that many adults hold as extremely anthropomorphic views as are quoted here? Is it not possible also that many adults do not rise to the clearly spiritual interpretation of God that some of these children disclose? Some of the child's most intimate experiences are spiritual in character, e.g., his relations with loved parents or playmates. Is there not, therefore, a possibility that the interpretation of God in terms of the child's real experiences offers opportunities not frequently taken advantage of? Might not such interpretations lead away from the crudities of outworn theology rather than toward them?

If the responses which indicate inability to understand are examined in the light of teaching, we can see that the teaching

is at any rate as much to blame as the child's incapacity. These indicate, if anything, the failure to interpret God in terms of the child's experience. One child refers to a picture of the head of Christ as a true representation of God evidently because that was literally how God was pictured to her. Is the belief of one child that Jesus rises from the grave every Easter evidence that the teacher must wait until the child is old enough to understand? Is the idea that "Jesus is a little boy" a characteristically childish idea or the result of the unusual emphasis in Sunday school teaching on the "Baby Jesus"? Is the dependence of the ideas of some children upon what "mother" says evidence that children can only recite the opinions of their elders? Or does it show that no other rational, than "Mother knows best," for beliefs held was ever presented to these children? Whatever can be concluded, there is no justification for assuming certain limits to the child's capacities until some experimentation on the problems indicates the specific character of a child's limitations.

It has been said by some who have made studies of children's ideas that children react to questioning largely in the spirit of play. This is a claim that cannot be adequately checked on the basis of this bit of interviewing. It can be said, however, that no such spirit of play was in evidence among the children whose responses are here reported. Three children who have never attended Sunday school and whose parents never taught them religious ideas gave clear evidence of a playful spirit. They described God not only in conventional terms, but enlarged upon such terms—God was not only a man, He was a man of enormous proportions and particularly vicious in character. "He will strike you dead if you tell a lie," one child maintained. Yet she loved to play with the idea, and actually induced the other children to engage in a playful dramatization of the idea in the back yard. There was no evidence of awe or fear. These children drew pictures of Him freely. One showed Him in the dress of an American Indian with magic shoes. God was to these children a combination of traditional theology, which they had picked up from their associates, and of blood and thunder tales of giants. They showed similar interest in angels and reacted with glee to the idea of the devil. There was not, however, a trace of this spirit found in the children for whom the idea of God was associated with awe, reverence, love, and affection. It

seems, then, that the assumption that children play with the idea of God as a matter of course is equally open to question, and that any truth in it will be found to have its basis in the particular experiences with which the idea of God has been associated.

It is necessary to add that the children whose responses are presented are not typical of primary children as a whole, but may be classified as having unusual advantages. Forty of them have attended a church school that has done noteworthy work in the primary grades and has emphasized the more liberal points of view in its teaching.

CHAPTER V

WHAT DO CHILDREN THINK ABOUT GOD? (*Continued*)

B. The Ideas of Children Nine to Fourteen Years of Age, Inclusive

The complete text of the test used with juniors and intermediates, with the percentage of the four hundred and forty-three children taking the test who responded positively to each statement, is given in this chapter. This will furnish the reader with the basic data with which to judge the instrument used and the conclusions drawn.

It was assumed that a survey of the religious ideas of children would not be complete if no more than the above-mentioned data was presented. Some scheme by which ideas could be classified and evaluated was considered necessary. In attempting to devise such a scheme, the test was submitted to a group of judges to be classified and evaluated in terms of standards in common use. Religious ideas are popularly classified as liberal, conservative, or heretical. It was considered advisable to use this type of classification to aid the interpretation of the findings in modern terminology, and with due reference to current religious issues. Objection will no doubt be made to the use of terms of such general and indefinite meaning. Each term really represents a scale of ideas, but the use of a scale would not be advantageous. First, the results would be so complicated as to make it extremely difficult to present them with conciseness and clarity. Secondly, the extreme ends of each scale would be so closely related as to make differentiation in this manner questionable. It was accordingly considered advisable to use the more generalized grouping and to retain only the ratings receiving the support of seventy per cent, or above, of the judges. The classification of these ideas will serve to show the sense in which terms are used. Some statements could not be classified as either conservative or liberal, being held in common by both

modernists and fundamentalists. It was, therefore, necessary to add another classification.

To show that a statement is liberal, conservative, common to both, or objectionable still leaves the most vital questions unanswered. Modern religious curricula have been constantly evaluated in the religious press in terms of ethical and scientific value. Any materials which represent God as participating in activities frowned upon by modern ethical standards are being increasingly eliminated from curricula. So also are materials which seem to be incompatible with modern standards of knowledge commonly associated with science. Here, then, are two criteria which must be used in interpreting ideas of God if this study is to have any particular value for teachers of religion. Each statement was therefore given a numerical ethical and scientific value. The term scientific, as used here, needs interpretation. A statement given positive scientific value is not upheld as a bit of veritable knowledge. The rating indicates that the statement is to a lesser degree in conflict with modern standards of knowledge.

Attention will first be given solely to a discussion of the responses to each section of the test. Scores have been given to represent conservative, liberal, and objectionable leanings of typical groups of children with some attention to individual scores. Scores are also given to represent the ethical and scientific value of ideas to which children have responded. These scores will be presented and discussed in a separate section. The ratings are given here so that the reader may be in possession of all the data from which conclusions are drawn, and upon which the scoring scheme used was built. It will be noted that only twenty-four statements out of one hundred and thirty-three were classified as liberal by more than seventy per cent of the raters, while forty-six conservative statements are selected. Practically all the liberal statements are given positive ethical value and a majority are given scientific value while the reverse is true of the explicitly conservative statements. The ethical and scientific scores will be equally determined by responses to objectionable and unclassified ideas. There will be, however, a marked relation between extreme liberal and ethical and scientific scores as a result of the rating. Other interesting observations are that all ideas questioning the theistic assumption are

classified as objectionable to all Protestant groups and many of the extremely anthropomorphic ideas also. The rating shows, therefore, a careful avoidance of the inclusion of extremes.

Only the responses of four hundred and forty-three children are included in this report. Some papers which were half finished were discarded.

There seems to be little question in the minds of most children as to God's omnipotence, omniscience, or His unchanging nature. These classic theological presuppositions do not, however, win universal assent. The dissenting voices are few, but most interesting. As high as twelve per cent agree that there are some things that God cannot do. This type of response is fairly evenly distributed among the different groups tested, increasing slightly in the more favored and more progressive groups.

God is also compared favorably to Jesus, a loving father or mother, and to a general on the battlefield. These likenesses are somewhat incongruous, but not at all strange, since each represents a well-established traditional figure of speech.

Twenty per cent of the children call the statement, "God is a wonderful kind of a person," false. This may occasion surprise. There is a possibility that a few children were affected by the nature of the statement, and might have responded differently to it if it were worded, "God is a personal spirit." Analysis shows, however, that seventy-five per cent of this minority respond in the affirmative to the statement that God is not like a person at all, which is pretty good evidence that fifteen per cent of the children tested have discarded the idea of a personal God, or have never acquired it. It will be wondered how a pupil making this response could go on to say "true" to so many statements implying a personal conception of God. One can argue that even some religious leaders, while defining God in impersonal terms, often speak of God as purposing and willing. Yet, even if this were a fact, it would not be an adequate explanation of the above apparent discrepancy. The problem must be studied along with many others of similar character before even a plausible explanation can be given.

Seventy-three per cent say that no one really knows what God is or is like, while an equal number have already assented to statements giving rather specific likenesses of Him. There is

I. General Presuppositions	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
1. God knows everything that ever was or ever happened, and everything that ever will happen.	x	..	..	..	..	..	95
2. God is like Jesus, the best, kindest, and wisest man that ever lived.	..	..	x	..	+2	..	94
3. God always was just as He is now.	x	..	..	..	0	—1	92
4. A father or mother who loves us and tries to have us grow up to be as healthy and wise as possible is like God.	..	..	x	..	+2	..	91
5. God is a wonderful kind of a person	..	..	x	..	+.5	..	90
6. I believe that God could make the sun stop and go back the other way, if He wished.	x	..	..	..	0	—2	88
7. God is three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—all in one.	x	..	..	..	0	—1	87
8. God is like a great law-maker who makes laws for us to obey.	x	..	..	..	—1	0	77
9. God has a face, hands, and feet just like a man.	..	..	..	x	0	—1.5	73
10. Nobody knows what God is, or what He is like.	..	..	..	x	0	+.5	73
11. God is like a great general leading His army into battle.	x	..	..	..	—1.5	—1.5	70
12. God is not like a person at all. He is something like electricity—just an energy that works, keeping things going and making things grow.	..	..	..	x	—1	+1	58
13. God cannot make me good unless I want to be good.	..	x	..	..	+2	+2	58
14. God is like a great king sitting on a throne, with hosts of people around to do just as He says.	x	..	..	..	—1.5	—1.5	39
15. God is like an old man with a beard, wearing long white clothes.	..	..	..	x	..	—2	34

I. General Presuppositions (*Continued*)	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
16. God is like a ghost.	..	..	..	x	..	—1.5	34
17. God doesn't know whether I am going to be a good Christian or not.	..	..	..	..	..	+1	32
18. Somebody must have made God.	..	..	..	x	0	..	26
19. A little girl says, "God is all bunk," meaning that she thought there wasn't any God at all. Is this idea which she had true or false?	..	..	..	x	..	..	8

no reason to assume that children gave much thought to these statements, yet neither can contradiction be assumed. One can and should make a distinction between matters of belief and verifiable knowledge.

Only eight per cent agreed with the extreme statement, "God is all bunk." This seems like a negligible percentage, but taking into consideration the facts that the statement is of unusually extreme nature and that the children were all attending schools of religion, it may be calculated to be alarming to religious leaders. There is a possibility that some children responded to the statement in the spirit of play, but this is not likely, for no playfulness was observed, or even once reported as occurring, during the giving of the test. In addition to this, the statement was first of all taken from the lips of a primary child, and four teachers who assisted in gathering the material which forms the basis of this test reported similar utterances on the part of children. There is every reason to believe that heretical ideas which used to appear no earlier than college age are now found among even kindergarten and primary children. Some will naturally inquire as to how much of this is due to modernism. This question cannot be fully answered at present, but the responses to the statement under discussion were carefully checked in the two groups composed of fifty-five children representing all the elementary grades which are known to be under the influence

of preachers and teachers of progressive views, and not a single affirmative response was found among them. Most of the responses came from children in week-day schools who have had comparatively little Sunday school experience in the conventional type of Sunday school.

The amount of inconsistency apparent in a comparison of responses to statements 5 and 12, 6 and 13, 1 and 17, is amazing. This is an outstanding characteristic of children's thinking about God as represented in this study. The discussion of this matter is reserved for the general survey of findings concluding this chapter.

II. God's Place of Abode	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
1. God is everywhere—in the wind and in the sunlight; in plants, animals and men; in the world and up among the stars—there is no place in the universe where He is not.	..	..	..	..	0	+1.5	95
2. God is in Heaven.	x	..	..	..	0	—2	80
3. Nobody knows where God is.	..	..	..	x	0	+1	64
4. God is in church buildings more than He is in other buildings.	x	..	..	..	—1	—2	57
5. God lives in different places at different times.	..	..	..	x	0	—2	56
6. God is up in the sky more than anywhere else.	x	..	..	..	0	—2	48
7. God was in the world once, but He isn't here now because He died and went to Heaven.	..	..	..	x	..	—2	38
8. God visits the earth sometimes, but He isn't here always.	..	..	..	..	0	—2	37
9. God cannot be everywhere at the same time.	..	..	..	x	0	—1.5	25

Nearly all children assent to the idea that God is everywhere. Most of these at the same time approve of the statement that

He is in Heaven, and nearly half agree with the belief that He is primarily resident in the sky. To adults this involves contradiction, but it is possible that some thoughtful children see harmony in some of these apparently diverse ideas. One child who was asked how he reconciled the idea of God living up in the sky with his belief that He was also everywhere, replied, "Because he moves so fast."

III. The Efficacy of Prayer	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
1. When I talk to God I often find out what is right for me to do.	..	..	x	..	+1.5	..	95
2. God answers our prayers mostly when we do our best to answer them ourselves.	..	x	..	..	—2	+1.5	90
3. We often get answers to prayers that we don't know of.	..	..	x	..	..	..	90
4. God will give us anything we ask for if we really have faith enough.	x	..	..	..	—1.5	—1.5	88
5. God won't give us anything we ask for but He knows what is best for us and gives us that.	..	..	..	..	..	..	85
6. One boy says, "If we try to answer our own prayers, then God will do just the last bit that we can't do." Has he a true or false idea?	..	..	..	..	+1	..	73
7. It doesn't do a fellow any good to pray.	..	..	..	x	..	..	6
8. God is too far away to hear us when we pray.	..	..	..	x	..	..	5

Statement 7, in section II, was taken verbatim from a child who expressed it in a Sunday school class discussion. "God can't be here now," he contended, "because He died and went to Heaven." The percentage of agreement with this statement indicates that many children make no distinction between God and Jesus. Forty-two per cent agree with the statement that "Jesus

was God Himself" in the final section of the test, which suggests that, if the clause "God can't be here now" were dropped from the statement, more positive responses would have been received.

The idea that God moves from place to place is widespread. Some members of a class of intermediate girls attending a progressive religious school were the authors of the statement. One of these confided in her teacher that she thought of God as "flying through the air."

It is of interest to note that the conception of prayer as an aid to moral conduct receives the chief support. This was also true of the younger children. Statements 4 and 5 appear in the test in the order in which they appear here. If the order were reversed it is possible that fewer contradictions would have occurred. In a test at which a child has to work rapidly, it might be advantageous to have the less extreme statement come first. But when one considers the history of these two ideas, it is not surprising that some children, working rapidly, should mark both true. But it is surprising that *so many* should mark both true.

Six per cent of the children find no value in prayer, and these children are scattered throughout the various groups and grades. They cannot be accounted for in terms of school or age.

The idea that God is too far away to be heard is expressed only by children from the more backward schools and from week-day schools, not long in existence. Nearly all agreeing with this statement seem by a comparison of ages and grades to be retarded in school work.

Generalized ideas which have the sanction of old traditions are always assented to as in the case of statement 1, section IV, but responses to more specific statements show considerable qualification of this general position. God loves all, but He loves Buddhists and Mohammedans less than Christians, and Roman Catholics less than He loves Protestants. Twenty per cent think He does not love criminals at all. Fifteen per cent think Jews are beyond the pale because they killed Jesus.

Only twenty-nine per cent agree with statement 4, which indicates that many children think the biblical view of divine justice referred to is true. The statement was omitted by none of the children, seventy-one per cent calling it false. There is a possibility that the reference to the Bible is responsible for this large percentage. If this is true the response is no less significant.

IV. The Manner of God's Love	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
1. God loves everybody in the world—Negroes, Chinese, Italians, and Jews, rich and poor, good and bad.	..	..	x	..	+2	+.5	99
2. A man was so bad once that he cursed God, and had murdered a person. A preacher told him that if he was really sorry and was anxious to make up for the wrong he had done that God would forgive him. Is what the preacher said true or false?	..	..	x	..	+1.5	0	95
3. God loves Protestants better than he loves Catholics.	..	..	..	..	—2	—.5	39
4. It is written in the Bible that God once told the Israelites to kill all the men, women and children belonging to their enemies. One little girl read it and then told her teacher that it wasn't true; that God was too kind to do a thing like that. Is what this little girl said true or false?	..	x	..	..	+1	..	29
5. God once loved the Jewish nation more than He loved other nations, and did more for them.	x	..	..	..	—2	—.5	28
6. God doesn't love criminals.	..	..	..	x	—2	..	20
7. God doesn't love Mohammedans, Buddhists, or Hindus, or Jews as much as He loves Christians.	..	..	..	..	—2	..	20
8. God doesn't love the Jews as He loves other people, because they killed Jesus.	..	..	..	x	—2	..	15
9. Another girl says that God doesn't love everybody because there are so many poor and hungry children in the world. Is this a true or false argument?	..	..	..	x	—2	..	6

If children are so conditioned toward the Bible that they allow the mention of it to interfere with their expression of their sense of justice, this is not a situation to be taken lightly. It is not likely, however, that many children were so affected. The results of the interviews with younger children showed that a considerable number of them believe that God still massacres men, women, and children wholesale. This view was often expressed in discussions of earthquakes and storms when no reference was made to the Bible. Statement 8 in section V and statement 12 in section VI, which are of like character, were reacted to in a similar manner.

Six per cent are impressed with the apparent disregard for life in the world about them as evidence tending to negate the idea of a loving God. The percentage seems insignificant, yet perhaps the dissenting voices, however few, may give us the best cue to the improvement of teaching. This particular minority is not peculiar to any age, school, or grade group.

In section V general ideals—kindness, love, and duty—are approved by children more frequently than are statements of any other sort. This probably accounts for the wholesale approval of some modern views not commonly held. The Bible is one of the chief media of revelation, sixty-three per cent agreeing that God told biblical authors what to write. Sixty-two per cent place some moderns on a level with the apostles. Sixty-seven per cent give the Bibles of the Chinese and Hindus the credit of containing some divine wisdom. Only fifty-eight per cent think of the work of scientists as revealing something of God's works. Considering the present controversy over science, and evolution, in particular, this is not surprising. More remarkable is the fact that seventy-nine per cent believe in divine communication through dreams and miracles, and that seventy-eight per cent believe storms and earthquakes are God's instruments of instruction. Only thirty-eight per cent deny that God appeared to the very eyes of men. The statement receiving the least support is perhaps the most significant. Wherever "Nobody knows . . ." appears in the test, it receives considerable support. One cannot escape the feeling that children frequently express beliefs concerning God's nature and the manner of his works while reserving a question regarding His existence. This position was found repeatedly among trained teachers who were

V. How People Learn About God	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
1. We are learning a lot about God when we learn to be healthy and how to get along with other people, so that everyone is friendly and happy.	..	x	..	..	+2	+1	92
2. The best way to find out what God is like is by being always kind and loving to people, because God is love and we can't know what He is like until we learn to really love people.	..	x	..	..	+2	+1	89
3. A call to do our duty is the voice of God just as much as the voice which Moses heard from the burning bush.	..	x	..	..	+1.5	+1.5	88
4. The visions that Paul and other men in the Bible had were just the same as we have when we suddenly discover that we have been in the wrong, and see what we really ought to do.	..	x	..	..	+1	+1	84
5. We learn about God from the flowers and the sunshine and the birds, and all the beautiful things in the out-of-doors.	..	..	..	..	+1	+2	82
6. God visits people in their dreams and tells them things that way.	..	..	..	..	0	—2	79
7. The Bible tells us that God turned Aaron's rod into a snake to prove to the people that He had sent Aaron to teach them. Is it true that God sometimes sends miracles this way in order to teach us?	x	..	..	..	—1	—2	79
8. Sometimes God sends storms and earthquakes to remind us that we have been doing wrong.	x	..	..	..	—1.5	—2	78
9. God sends special men who are inspired by Him to teach us what we ought to know.	..	..	..	..	0	..	73

V. How People Learn About God (*Continued*)	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
10. The Bibles of the Chinese and the Hindus and the Mohammedans can tell us some things about God.	..	x	..	..	+1	+1	67
11. God sends angels to people to tell them things.	x	..	..	..	0	—2	66
12. The people who wrote the Bible were told by God what to write, so we can easily read for ourselves what He says.	x	..	..	..	—1	—2	63
13. There are some people living to-day who know just as much about God as the apostles and the other great men in the Bible did.	..	x	..	..	+1	+1	62
14. Scientists who study about electricity and atoms and electrons, and the stars and evolution can help us learn more about the way God does things.	..	x	..	..	+1	+2	58
15. We can never know more about God than the Bible tells us.	x	..	..	..	—1	—2	55
16. Some people have seen God with their eyes, and He told them with a voice they could hear with their ears what He wanted them to do...	x	..	..	..	0	—2	54
17. God talked aloud to people, and performed miracles in Bible times, but He doesn't do these things now.	x	..	..	..	—1	—2	52
18. People have to be church members before they really know God.	x	..	..	..	—1.5	..	40
19. I don't believe God ever talked to people so they could hear Him with their ears or see Him with their eyes.	..	x	..	..	..	+2	38
20. Nobody has really found out anything about God.	..	..	..	x	..	—1	29

VI. Some of the Things God Has Done and Is Doing for Us Now	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
1. God feeds and cares for the birds and animals and insects because He loves them every one.	..	..	x	..	+1	..	97
2. God cares for us at night while we sleep so no harm will befall us.	x	..	..	..	..	−1	95
3. God cares for all our needs. He gives us food and clothing, friends and homes, and all the nice things we have.	..	..	..	..	..	−.5	91
4. God intends to make the world better and better until people learn to live together without hating and hurting one another.	..	x	..	..	+2	+1	90
5. God is going to take all good people to Heaven.	x	..	..	..	..	−.5	89
6. I think God watches us and keeps a record of all the good and bad things we do.	x	..	..	..	..	..	88
7. No matter what we think about Heaven and Hell, good people will be happier after they die than bad ones.	..	..	..	..	+1.5	0	86
8. God created the world, and everything there is, in six days.	x	..	..	..	0	−2	84
9. God made laws which we must obey in order to be healthy and happy, and people suffer because they disobey them, or don't know what they are.	..	..	..	..	+1.5	+2	84
10. The reason why God made all plants and animals was because He wanted all human beings to have food and clothing and beautiful things.	..	..	..	..	..	..	81
11. Man was once good and there was no badness in the world, but Adam and Eve sinned and caused all the sin in the world, and now God is trying to make us good again.	x	..	..	..	−1	−2	80

VI. Some of the Things God Has Done and Is Doing for Us Now (*Continued*)	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
12. God sometimes sends storms and earthquakes upon people to punish them, just like the Bible says He sent the plagues on the Egyptians.	x	..	..	..	−2	−2	73
13. If I were really a good person, but couldn't swim, and I fell into deep water, God would save me just the same.	..	..	..	x	−1	−2	73
14. God can't be kind and helpful to needy people unless we, too, are kind and helpful and anxious to share the things we have with them.	..	x	..	..	+1.5	+1	73
15. God makes some people poor so we can learn how to love them and care for them.	..	..	..	x	−2	−2	70
16. We would never need to be sick or have anything terrible happen to us if we had faith enough in God.	x	..	..	..	−1	−2	69
17. God will send some people to Hell after they die.	x	..	..	..	−1.5	−1.5	67
18. God took some earth and made the first man out of it. Then he took one of the man's ribs and made the first woman from it.	x	..	..	..	−1	−2	67
19. God does only the good things that happen in the world, and is not to blame for the suffering and badness in the world.	..	..	..	..	..	..	64
20. Bad people will have a chance to learn to be good after they die.	..	x	..	..	+1	0	63
21. God doesn't save good people from accidents any more than He does bad people.	..	x	..	..	+1.5	+1.5	63
22. God planned everything from the beginning, and decided long ago who is going to be good and who is going to be bad, and everything that will happen in the future.	x	..	..	..	−2	−2	60

VI. Some of the Things God Has Done and Is Doing for Us Now (Continued)	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
23. A boy tells the story that a farmer cursed God because the rain had spoiled his hay, and immediately the lightning struck him and killed him. The boy thinks it was God who did this because the farmer had cursed Him. Is it true that God does things like this sometimes?	x	..	..	..	−2	−2	55
24. God is going to come to the world some day to judge us, and He will destroy the world.	x	..	..	..	..	..	49
25. One boy says that God won't do anything for us that we can't do for ourselves. Has he a true idea?	..	..	..	..	..	+.5	45
26. It took God millions of years to make human beings as they are now. He first made tiny creatures, then He made these grow and grow until they became like some lower animals we know. Then He made them grow more and more intelligent until they became human beings.	..	x	..	..	+.5	+2	44
27. When we die, that is the end of us. We will just disappear like the flowers.	..	..	..	x	−1	+1	35
28. The world will grow old and fly to pieces like some stars do, and everybody will be killed.	..	..	..	x	−.5	..	27
29. The world and stars and sun just grew and nobody made them.	..	..	..	x	0	..	17
30. I am sure that there are a lot of nasty creatures and fierce animals that God never made.	..	..	..	x	..	..	16
31. A small boy thinks that God is not caring for the birds and animals at all, because they are always killing and eating each other. Has he a true or false idea?	..	..	..	x	−1	..	9
32. God didn't make people and animals at all. They just grew.	..	..	..	x	0	..	6

asked to criticize the test used here. "*If* there is a God, He is" thus and so. It is possible that a minority of children responded to the test in the same manner.

Before these responses can be fully appreciated the reader should remember that 100 minus the percentage given represents approximately the percentage of dissenting voices, since the omission of a great number of statements was exceedingly rare. Only the most complete papers were included.

The support which statements of God's providential care, in section VI, receive is noteworthy. Even the extreme nature of statement 13 could not shake the faith of seventy-three per cent of the children. One group of junior boys unanimously calling this statement true were asked about it. They seemed surprised that their belief should be questioned at all. Furthermore, they added that when people get drowned it is because they are bad. These boys were all the sons of commuters of the lower middle-class from New York City. On the other hand, we find strong affirmation of positions that are not compatible with the latter, such as is found in statement 25.

Statement 23 was inserted primarily to see if children think of God as engaging in acts of violence through natural forces when biblical narratives are not at all under discussion. The results speak for themselves. Can these responses be due to wholesale marking of all statements "true," perhaps without reading them?

Statements 10, 15, and 19 may seem rather strained and uncalled for. They were inserted because such teaching was found to be implicit in the teaching or the practices of the church. It was suspected that children taught in Sunday schools would see nothing incongruous in such statements unless they were made subjects for discussion. The responses justify the suspicion.

Statement 27 is extreme, yet thirty-five per cent of the children agree with it. These responses came for the most part from the more prosperous church-going communities. One group of thirteen- and fourteen-year-old girls in a New York suburban city all called this statement true. It was supposed that the statement had been misunderstood, so the girls' Sunday school teacher who had given the test was asked if this was so. Her answer was, "No, they did not misunderstand. I don't know

VII. The Conduct Which God Requires or Approves	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
1. God wants us to love our neighbors.	..	..	x	..	+2	+.5	98
2. God wants us to be just as nice to Negroes, laborers, laundrymen and maids as we are to our neighbors. ..	..	..	x	..	+2	+1	98
3. God wants us to try to give everybody in the world a chance to get an education, and as many good things and good times as we ourselves enjoy.	..	..	..	..	+2	+1	97
4. God wants us to go to church regularly	x	..	..	..	..	..	96
5. God wants us very much to love and be kind to people and animals.	..	..	x	..	+2	+.5	94
6. God wants us to do our best to put an end to war so that there will never again be such killing of people as there was in the last war.	..	..	..	..	+2	+.5	93
7. God wants us to love our enemies.	..	..	x	..	+2	+.5	93
8. God wants us to believe all we are told about Him in the Bible.	x	..	..	..	−1.5	−1.5	90
9. God wants us to make the world so good that there will be no poor and needy people.	..	x	..	..	+2	+.5	85
10. God never wants us to obey anyone until we are quite sure that what we are told to do is a good thing to do.	..	x	..	..	+1.5	+.5	84
11. There will always be poor and needy people, and all God wants us to do is to send them food and clothing, and nice things for Thanksgiving and Christmas, to show them that we love them.	..	..	..	x	−2	−1	81
12. God only wants us to fight for our country when our country is in the right, and there is no other way to save it except by fighting.	..	..	..	..	−1	0	80

VII. The Conduct Which God Requires or Approves (*Continued*)	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
13. God never wants us to go to war to kill people.	..	x	..	..	+2	+.5	79
14. God wants us to always fight for our country whenever our government asks us to.	..	..	..	..	−2	−1	75
15. God wants us to obey our parents without asking any questions.	..	..	..	..	−1.5	−.5	73
16. God wants us to sing songs to Him and praise Him for His goodness.	x	..	..	..	−.5	..	73
17. God wants us to get everybody in the world to join the Christian church.	x	..	..	..	..	−.5	71
18. God wants us to love Him more than we do people and animals.	x	..	..	..	−1	−.5	58
19. God doesn't want us to be kind to bad people like criminals.	..	..	..	x	−2	−.5	32
20. God likes to have us fight bullies.	..	..	..	..	..	..	30
21. Sometimes we can please God best by telling a lie.	..	..	..	x	..	0	13
22. God doesn't care what we do.	..	..	..	x	−1.5	0	5

where they got the idea, but none of them believe in immortality. We have discussed it often."

Observations already made apply equally to section VII. General ideals rated as "common" come first. Next, as might be expected, comes a mixture of conservative and liberal statements, and, finally, the objectionable ideas, which receive the least support.

A strange inconsistency exists between responses to several pairs of statements, for example, numbers 9 and 11. This question of inconsistency is the most tantalizing problem that has arisen during this brief survey of children's responses. By this time the reader is thoroughly suspicious of the test used. That the test is open to criticism goes without saying;

VIII. On Jesus' Relation to God and His Supernatural Powers	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value	Scientific Value	Percentage Agreeing with Statement
1. Jesus is living near us still and can help us when we need Him and trust Him.	..	..	..	..	+1	−.5	96
2. When Jesus was born angels sang to tell of His coming, and other wonderful things happened to show the world that God had sent Him.	x	..	..	..	0	−2	95
3. Jesus was God's only son.	x	..	..	..	..	..	86
4. Jesus rose from the dead. He came out of His grave and went up to Heaven before the eyes of many people.	x	..	..	..	0	−1.5	78
5. Jesus will come to the world again.	x	..	..	..	0	−1.5	78
6. It is the way Jesus lived, the things He thought and the things He did for people that saves us from sin.	..	x	..	..	+1.5	+1	76
7. No one in all the world will ever go to Heaven unless He has heard of, and believes in, Jesus.	x	..	..	..	−1.5	−1.5	76
8. Jesus could do anything He liked.	x	..	..	..	−.5	−1.5	69
9. If Jesus had not been crucified no one would ever go to Heaven.	x	..	..	..	−1.5	−1	58
10. It is hard to believe that Jesus could walk on the sea and do things like that.	..	x	..	..	0	+2	58
11. I don't understand how Jesus being crucified saves us from sin.	..	x	..	..	0	+.5	50
12. Good men like Lincoln and St. Francis are sometimes called sons of God, and some people think that they are sons of God in the same way that Jesus was a son of God. Is this a true or false thought to have?	..	x	..	..	+1.5	+1	46
13. The Bible story about the angels and the shepherds and the wise men coming to the place where Jesus was born is a make-believe story.	..	x	..	..	0	+1.5	43
14. Jesus was God Himself.	x	..	..	..	..	..	42

nevertheless, it will be fair to reserve judgment until the end of the chapter.

The unconditional condemnation of lying is in perfect keeping with Sunday school teaching on this subject. It is impossible to say what led thirteen per cent of the children to agree that a lie might serve God's purposes. The reception given to other statements can, with one or two exceptions, be accounted for equally well by reference to the chapter on curricula. Number 10, for example, expresses a sentiment which is not found in teaching materials. It is of the sort, however, that would immediately appeal to many children when read. The more familiar statement about obedience to parents—since it comes first—would naturally be marked true. Children working rapidly did not see the inconsistency between the two.

The first nine statements in section VIII represent, with the possible exception of number 6, high lights in traditional Christology. These receive the chief support. Approximately half of the children find no difficulty in understanding the "mystery of the cross" and the supernatural works of Jesus. The explanation to many is, no doubt, found in statement 14. Forty-six per cent place Jesus in the same category as Lincoln and St. Francis, yet the responses to number 2 seem to offset this. These contradictory responses seem inconceivable. Why should so many children respond to numbers 2 and 13 in the same manner?

A few ideas used in the preliminary test were dropped because of their universal acceptance. They were all ideas constantly met with in Sunday school literature, such as, "The Bible is God's Book," "God speaks to us through conscience," "God is love," etc. All general statements in common use which are not centers of controversy among adults seem to have little or no differentiating value.

It seems necessary in the interest of clarity to regroup the above ideas in abbreviated form. If the ideas in all sections of the test responded to positively by nearly the same percentage of children are thrown together, they will reveal the ideas upon which children are mostly in accord, those on which the greatest disagreement is found, as well as those most frequently negated.

Over ninety per cent of the children believe that God is omniscient; that He is changeless in nature; that in character He

most resembles a loving father or mother, or the man Jesus; that He is present everywhere; that the addressing of prayers to Him is primarily useful in the quest for moral guidance, and is particularly effective when the suppliant does his best to answer his own prayers; that some prayers are answered without knowledge; that God's love is universally extended to mankind; that He will forgive even murder; that to seek and find the laws governing health and happy relations with our fellows is to seek and find God; that God exercises individual protective care over birds, animals, and men; that He protects children at night and supplies man's every physical and spiritual need; that He is engaged in the establishment of a Kingdom of God on the earth; that He requires of us love for our neighbors, for all classes and all racial groups and even for our enemies; that He desires our every effort to give all under-privileged people the advantages of education and comforts that others enjoy; that war should be speedily terminated; and that we should believe all the Bible says about God. On this level also it is agreed that Jesus came to the world to the accompaniment of angelic music and other unusual evidence of His divine origin and that He still abides with us, ever ready to help and succor when called upon.

In statements agreed to by from eighty to ninety per cent of the children, we have a deposit of Christian tradition which has occupied an almost equally sacred place as the above in the church's experience but more controversial in character. It is believed that: God is a wonderful person—He is three persons in one; He could make the sun stop and go back the other way if He wished; He lives in Heaven, and will supply us with anything we ask Him for; He will not grant every wish, but knows best what we need and supplies us with that; He is found in the exercise of ethical relations with people, and in the call of duty; visions of Him are visions of moral choice; He reveals Himself in the blossom and the sunshine; He provides a Heaven for the faithful; He has made laws which we must discover and obey in order to enjoy His lavish provisions; He created the world and all life in six days, but that Adam and Eve through disobedience brought disaster upon mankind, and that God is now engaged in the work of redemption; He keeps a record of our individual deeds; He asks us to work for a world that will be free from

poverty and privation; He does not expect man to obey another unless he is sure that what he is asked to do is right; He wants us to participate in war only when our cause is just, and every other effort for peace has failed. At the same level is found the ideas that we will always have the poor and needy with us and that all God requires is evidence of our love for them in the form of baskets of beautiful things at Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Ideas receiving from seventy to eighty per cent support express the views that: God has a face, hands, and feet like a man; He exercises His divine office like a general and a lawmaker; no one really knows what God is like; in answering prayers God will do just that last bit we cannot do ourselves; He reveals Himself through dreams, miracles, inspired men, storms, and earthquakes; He uses natural forces in the punishment of wrongdoing; He needs human coöperation in His work of mercy and redemption; He will save a good man from drowning even if he cannot swim a stroke; the poor and needy are in the world to give others exercise in charitable kindness; He desires songs of praise, universal church membership, and unquestioning obedience to parents; to participate in war under any circumstance is against His will; He wants us to go to war whenever our government asks us to; only those will go to Heaven who have heard of and believe in Jesus; it is Jesus' exemplary life that saves us from sin; Jesus rose from the grave; and He will come to the world again.

At the next level we, of course, find an increased incompatibility between ideas. From sixty to seventy per cent agree on the following ideas: no one knows where God is; the Bibles of the Chinese and Buddhists contain some knowledge of God; angels bring word from Him; He dictated the Bible to some of His followers; there are people in the world now who know just as much about God as did the great Bible characters; God's provisions for us are so complete that no one would be sick or meet with disaster if he had faith enough in the Father; God will not save the good from sickness and accidents any more than He will the wicked; He is responsible for only the good that is done in the world; He planned all things from the beginning, even the destinies of individuals; He created woman from a man's rib; He will give the sinner a chance to redeem himself

after death; He will send some to Hell; and Jesus possesses unlimited power.

Ideas receiving from forty to sixty per cent are the ideas upon which children chiefly disagree. It is profitable to throw these together. They reveal the real issues from the standpoint of childhood. They are: God is not like a person at all; He cannot make men good unless they desire to be good; He lives especially in church buildings; He lives in different places at different times; He is up in the sky; to know Him one must join the Christian church; scientists can tell us something about Him; men once talked face to face with God as one person to another; He appeared in this apparent material form to men at one time, but does not do so now; He created the life in the world by slow degrees, developing it from lower to higher forms; He will not do anything for us that we cannot do for ourselves; the slaying of a farmer by lightning because he cursed the Almighty is characteristic of God's treatment of sinners; He is going to come to the world some day to destroy it; He asks of us to love Him more than we do people and animals; the cross of Jesus is an essential factor in God's scheme of salvation; it is hard to understand the saving mystery of the cross, and the miracles wrought by Jesus; the nativity stories are of the "make-believe" variety; Jesus was God's son in the manner that Lincoln and other good men are sons of God; and Jesus was God Himself.

We now come to the ideas which most children regard as undesirable. From thirty to forty per cent hold: God is like a King, an old man, and a ghost; God does not know whether or not a boy or girl is to be a good Christian; God died and went to Heaven; He visits the earth sometimes; He loves Protestants better than He loves Catholics; no one ever saw Him with his eyes or heard Him with his ears; when we die we cease to be; He wants us to fight bullies; and the destructive relations of animals indicate that God is not interested in their well-being.

From twenty to thirty per cent agree on the following ideas: someone must have made God; He cannot be everywhere at the same time; when the Bible says God approved of the killing of innocent women, children, and cattle it is not telling the truth; God loves Mohammedans and Buddhists less than He does

Christians; He has no love at all for criminals; no one has found out anything about God; and some day the world may fly to pieces and everyone will be killed.

A few ideas receive the support of between ten and twenty per cent of the children. They are: God dislikes the Jews because they killed Jesus; we can sometimes please God by telling a lie; the world and the stars were not made by God, but just grew; and there are many nasty creatures in the world that God could not have made.

Ideas receiving the least support are: "God is all bunk"; it is useless to pray; God is too far away to hear prayer; the existence of hunger and suffering in the world is evidence that God is not caring for His children; people and animals just grew and God had nothing to do with their creation; and, finally, God does not concern Himself with our conduct.

We have in the first of these groups the outstanding emphases in religious curricula upon which the various textbook series are in substantial agreement. All the statements classified as "common" are found in this group. There is but one idea that cannot be said to receive such universal sanction, and this is that God requires men to believe all that is said of Him in the Bible.

In the second group are found more ideas of similar character with the addition of others which are central in current theological controversies; but do not, however, represent the keenest issues between fundamentalists and modernists.

In the third group many more of the extremely anthropomorphic and miraculous elements find a place. In this group appears a God who is like a general or lawmaker, who is possessed of miraculous powers which He uses in His dealings with men; whose care of the faithful is unconditional and without stint; who desires praise of Himself and participation in church life. There is a flat contradiction on the question of His attitude toward war.

Group four is of similar character.

In the central group, i.e., on the forty to sixty per cent level, are seen the points of chief disagreement. Here we find the question of God's personal nature, the claim of His unlimited power, His place of abode, the value of science as a source of knowledge of God, the evolutionary view of creation, and the absolute deity and humanity of Jesus. The question of God's

dwelling place is the only one of these ideas which is not a center of disturbance in adult thinking.

The last four groups show an increasing number of heresies, extremely unethical points of view and also the naïve views so commonly associated with children.

Table A will throw further light upon the nature of the ideas found at the various percentile levels. We see by this table that conservative and liberal statements appear with the same relative frequency at each level, and that none of either class receives less than twenty per cent support. Liberal statements are disputed with slightly greater frequency, but it is surprising the extent to which they are accepted by the great majority of the children. It is evident also that this acceptance of liberal points of view did not achieve the displacement of conservative ideas. The lion and the lamb are lying down together.

The fact that statements rated as "common to both" receive the approval of more than ninety per cent of the children is a valuable check on the accuracy of the rating.

Nearly two-thirds of the statements rated as of objectionable character are below the forty per cent level. Yet there are twenty-seven per cent of these objectionable ideas which receive the support of from fifty to eighty-nine per cent of the pupils. Evidently some of the statements that were objectionable to the raters are not objectionable to a majority of the children. If we examine these statements we find that all but one are implicit in the teaching of the church and in its conventional address to such problems as poverty. They are: no one knows what God is like; God has a face, hands, and feet like a man; He would save a good man from drowning regardless of his skill as a swimmer; the poor are made poor so that others can love them and care for them; and the poor being always with us, God requires only that we be kind to them during certain festive seasons.

The statements which approximately seventy per cent of the children classified as untrue are of a vastly different nature. These can be classified as follows. First, those which are explicitly denied in Sunday school teaching, such as God's approval of bullying and lying. Second, those of extremely naïve character which seem to appeal especially to children of retarded mentality, such as the belief that God is so far away

He cannot hear prayers, and that someone must have made God. Third, statements tending to deny God's existence or His active participation in the affairs of men and the universe.

Nearly all the statements rated as of positive ethical value are supported by more than half the children, three-fourths of them receiving over seventy per cent support. Only one statement so rated appears below the thirty per cent level, and the children's judgment of this statement is backed by Holy Writ. The idea is that the biblical story which tells of God approving the slaughtering of women and children is not true. With this one exception the reactions to the class of statements under discussion are encouraging. But, unfortunately, a look at the responses to the unethical statements seems to reveal that children possess meager powers of ethical discrimination. Over a third of these statements are supported by more than seventy per cent of the pupils. Yet a second look will reveal that while children have responded to unethical statements in the affirmative they are at the same time in keeping with much of the teaching they have received. The ideas receiving such large measure of agreement are: God is like a general and a lawmaker; God will give men anything they ask for; He communicates with men through works of wonder; the sins of Adam and Eve brought disaster upon mankind; God uses the forces of nature to punish evildoers; men should believe all the Bible tells about God; men should fight whenever their government asks them to; they should fight only when the country has a just cause; and children should obey parents without question, etc. These unethical ideas, if unethical they are, are all backed by sacred traditions. On the other hand, the unethical ideas rejected by the children are all of the "objectionable" class with one single exception. They are identical with the extremely objectionable statements already reviewed. It must not, however, be forgotten that a very significant minority does support these extreme points of view.

Statements rated on the bases of their compatibility with modern standards of thought are distributed evenly in both the positive and negative columns, all of them being accepted by twenty per cent of the subjects. Compatibility with modern knowledge seems to enter into the selection of ideas to a lesser degree than any other factor.

TABLE A

THE PERCENTAGE OF STATEMENTS EVALUATED AND CLASSIFIED IN A PARTICULAR WAY WHICH APPEARS AT EACH LEVEL

PERCENTAGE OF STATEMENTS EVALUATED	Conservative	Liberal	Common to Both	Objectionable	Ethical Value		Scientific Value	
					+	−	+	−
90 to 100%	13	12	100	..	45	2	29	11
80 to 89%	20	21	..	3	21	9	18	15
70 to 79%	22	12	..	14	10	26	10	26
60 to 69%	15	17	..	3	10	14	10	13
50 to 59%	17	17	..	7	5	17	13	15
40 to 49%	9	12	..	..	5	2	10	2
30 to 39%	2	4	..	17	..	10	9	13
20 to 29%	2	4	..	17	3	10	..	5
10 to 19%	..	..	..	14	..	2	..	..
0 to 9%	..	..	..	24	..	7	..	..

Two generalizations can now be made:

First, *children show an astonishing lack of discriminative thought.* Ideas with little similarity, and sometimes ideas which are flatly contradictory, are all frequently accepted by the same children as true. God is a wonderful person to ninety per cent of the children and, at the same time, the idea that God is not like a person at all is agreed to by fifty-eight per cent. Ninety-three per cent seem to think that it is just like God to strike a man dead by a stroke of lightning for profanity, and seventy-three per cent think He uses disastrous storms and earthquakes as instruments of correction and instruction. It seems true to eighty-four per cent that we should obey others only when what we are asked to do seems right to us, and at the same time seventy-three per cent agree with the statement that children should obey their parents without question of any sort. Eighty per cent call the statement true, that men should engage in war only when their country is in the right, and there is no other way out of the difficulty; seventy-nine per cent agree that we should *never* engage in war with intent to kill; and seventy-five per cent agree that we should go to war whenever our government asks us to. Such overlappings and contradictions are

found in the responses to every section of the test. What is the reason for this apparent lack of integrated thought?

The first guess in seeking an answer to this question is that children just played with the test, marking some statements true and others false, perhaps, without reading them, in order to get through with a wearisome task. Closer examination of the responses reveals that the guess has missed the truth, for if it were true some heretical and extremely objectionable statements would have received greater support. Twenty-four per cent of the objectionable elements were supported by less than ten per cent of the children, while those receiving strong support are excusable inferences from religious teaching. Children have shown a general dislike for ideas questioning God's existence or His participation in human affairs, and for ideas of extremely unethical character. In addition to this the outstanding issues among these children, according to the test, are also outstanding issues among adult religionists. Again, all statements classified as common to all Protestant bodies and schools of thought were supported by over ninety per cent of the subjects. There is, therefore, little reason to assume that the children played with the test and, on the contrary, there seems to be sufficient evidence to show that children did pick and choose to the best of their ability. One thing can be said with certainty—the test was not boresome to children. It was received with enthusiasm. Many groups requested their teachers to discuss the test in their classes and, indeed, it was difficult to restrain discussion until the test was completed. One group of from forty to fifty intermediate boys begged their teacher for an opportunity to "talk the test over," their spokesman remarking, "Gee, we never got anything like this in Sunday school."

These remarks are not intended to imply that the test is not partly to blame. In the first place, it is so long that some children must have been affected by fatigue. Many of the statements involve a lot of reading which militates against a proper understanding of them. The test also contains a few "double-headers" which are confusing even though the ideas coupled together are so coupled in Christian tradition. Yet when all these defects are taken into consideration, enough remains to show a great tendency to indiscriminate reactions.

It may also be argued that children called all the ideas which

they had heard at home and in Sunday schools true, concealing their real reactions. Some children who are conscious of the fact that certain ideas are not acceptable to their Sunday school teachers no doubt did conceal some of their real reactions. While restraint of this sort is found in schools of religion, it will be difficult to eliminate such reactions altogether. Yet, when the diverse nature of the ideas found in the test is taken into consideration, it will be seen that this reaction cannot have occurred very frequently. Children were given the ideas of other children to evaluate and they contained the most extremely heretical as well as the most extremely conservative points of view. If it was encouragement they wanted they had it. However, if the supposition that children reacted in this manner was found to be absolutely true, the results herein reported should be of no less interest to religious teachers, for in this report they could see themselves as their children see them. But to assume that children reacted in this dishonest manner would be to assume also a degree of independent thinking on the part of children which cannot be supported by any available data. The experiences of distress commonly reported as occurring among students of high schools and colleges as a consequence of contact with facts and opinions out of harmony with traditional beliefs do not seem to indicate that much independent thinking has been going on in the elementary grades. This recalls several observations already made. First, many contradictions and incompatible ideas were discovered in the teaching materials of the Protestant churches. May it not be, therefore, assumed that some of the contradictions found in children's reactions are taught? Secondly, it was disclosed that little or no effort was being made to develop in children the habit of and ability for discriminative thinking and that, in fact, certain fundamental ideas, such as, God's existence, His love, and His active participation in the work of creation, were not to be questioned at all. Also it was found to be almost universally true among textbook writers that they feared greatly to raise problems for children. The few who encouraged teachers to allow children to "express themselves" also advised them to make no further use of these expressions. They were not incorporated in the curriculum with a view to encouraging discrimination. More important still was the discovery that the

most significant data, such as the facts of nature and of biblical research which are so indispensable to the building up of an independent and enduring philosophy, were for the most part withheld from children. Mention was also made of several widespread practices leading to the evasion of all serious issues. Taking all these facts into consideration, it would be foolhardy to expect more evidence of careful thinking than this test has disclosed. The extent to which the inconsistencies found in children's reactions exceed the inconsistencies of the unsystematic teachings to which they have been exposed is more probably due to immaturity than to the unreliability or invalidity of the test.

Second, *children's responses show that their ideas are strikingly similar to ideas found in Sunday school literature.* Little more than this need be said. The statement merely summarizes what has appeared again and again in the foregoing discussions. The most cherished ideas of the Protestant churches have received the unstinted approval of children. Among these is found belief in God's exercise of personal protective care over men and animals. It was noted that this position has been considerably modified in very recent textbooks, even in the new International Lessons. This is a new development which is not paralleled in the minds of children and which will no doubt affect their thinking in the near future. At present they strictly follow the emphases in the older texts from which they have been taught. Crude, naïve, nontheistic, and extremely unethical statements which never find a place in religious curricula receive comparatively little support from children. Belief in God and unbelief, which seem to be the chief criteria which children used in judging ideas, are the only criteria which are strictly adhered to in religious teaching as revealed in textbooks. They are seen in the universal fear of raising difficulties for children, and in specific warnings against doubt. The study of curricula also revealed considerable emphasis upon ideals, such as, the duty to love our fellows—even our enemies. Such ideals receive the hearty support of most children, but many ideas rated as unethical are given similar support. This is not a departure from teaching nor can it be regarded as evidence that these children have yet much to learn from the church, for exactly similar departures from such professed idealism were frequently

found in textbooks. Children divide on questions involving God's cruel treatment of sinners. Similar divisions of opinion are noted in textbooks. Exceedingly few data on scientific and historical questions were found in textbooks; it is not, therefore, strange that children should give so little evidence of judging ideas upon the basis of their compatibility with known fact and the scientific spirit. If they had shown ability of this sort, it would be necessary to trace such ability to some source other than the church. The method of the modernist element contributing to curricula was found to be positive rather than negative, i.e., the presentation of new ideas was done without condemning ideas which the children might be supposed to hold. The result, as indicated by these findings, is that children have accepted all without any effort to integrate and evaluate. It seems that no matter how the reactions of children are compared as a whole with teaching materials as a whole, a striking similarity is found.

Extremely conservative positions, such as, belief in the biblical creation story, the fall of man, and the Trinity, received less than ninety per cent support. Visions, dreams, miracles, and angels appear below the eighty per cent level. From the thirty per cent level and below will also be found ideas which are, from the religious point of view, extremely objectionable. Even the idea that "God is all bunk" was backed by eight per cent of the pupils. As high as seventy per cent agreed with statements expressing ignorance of God's nature, whereabouts, and activities. There seems to be an undercurrent of uncertainty in children's minds concerning the ideas they hold, though it has not yet found specifically thoughtful expression. It will be seen later whether or not this slight tendency to accept undesirable ideas is in any way connected with modernist teaching.

The above findings are based upon the broadest possible survey of the data. The following chapter will reveal details which will serve to differentiate between individual and group responses.

CHAPTER VI

CHILDREN'S RESPONSES IN TERMS OF SCORES

I. THE CHILDREN TESTED

The children whose responses are here considered are all from New York City, suburban towns, and neighboring cities. They are classified in the following groups:

Group 1. Eleven boys and twenty-two girls, ranging in age from ten to fourteen years, from a suburban Congregational church.

Group 2. Three boys and five girls, ages eleven to fourteen, from a suburban Episcopal church.

Group 3. Seven boys and six girls, ages ten to fourteen, from a community week-day school in Westchester County.

Group 4. Two boys and three girls, ages eleven to twelve, from a suburban Baptist church.

Group 5. Eight boys and thirteen girls, ages ten to fourteen, from a suburban Methodist church.

Group 6. Five boys and ten girls, ages ten to fourteen, from a suburban Presbyterian church.

Group 7. Thirteen boys and five girls, ages ten to fourteen, from a suburban Methodist church.

Group 8. Twenty-two boys and ten girls, ages ten to fourteen, from a suburban Presbyterian church.

Group 9. Five boys and seven girls, ages eleven to fourteen, from a suburban Episcopal church.

Group 10. Four boys and ten girls, ages twelve to fourteen, from an up-town Presbyterian church in New York City.

Group 11. Twenty boys and thirty-four girls, ages nine to fourteen, from a down-town west-side church in New York City. The children in this group, though predominantly Presbyterian, represent several denominational backgrounds.

Group 12. Eight boys and twenty-two girls, ages nine to thirteen, from a suburban week-day religious school.

Group 13. Four boys and seventeen girls, nine to thirteen years of age, from a suburban week-day religious school.

Group 14. Twenty-five boys, ages nine to fourteen, from a New Jersey city neighborhood Y. M. C. A. These boys are mostly the children of unskilled laborers with various denominational backgrounds. They are reported to be "under-privileged" and to have had comparatively little Sunday school experience.

Group 15. Eight boys and two girls, ages nine to fourteen, from a down-town east-side Episcopal church in New York City.

Group 16. Nine girls and nine boys, ages nine to fifteen, from a Presbyterian church on Fifth Avenue, New York City. These are nearly all children of wealthy parents. Most of them have been from infancy associated with a church well-known for the distinguished scholarship and liberalism of its ministers. They have had the special advantage of being under the care of a skilled director of religious education. If opportunity and a stimulating environment have anything to do with religious thinking, the work of this group should be a marked contrast to the performance of the average Sunday school child.

Group 17. Ten girls, ages ten to thirteen, from a down-town east-side community church. These children are Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and Jewish, but all have been receiving religious instruction for several years in this Protestant center.

Groups 18, 19, and 20. These groups are all from one community church school in a New Jersey town peopled largely with business and professional commuters from New York City. Group 18 is composed of sixteen girls from eleven to fourteen years of age. Group 19 is made up of twenty-one boys, nine to fourteen years of age, and group 20 of eight girls, thirteen to fourteen years old. The church which these children attend is composed of various denominational elements. The church school has been handicapped by quarreling factions and by lack of equipment, but it has made a special attempt to teach liberalism and to employ

only teachers of unquestioned qualification. The Staff has for two years prior to the testing been composed in part of graduate students and instructors from Teachers College. Most of the children, although living in an average suburban community, have had an unusually stimulating Sunday school training which should be noticeable in the results of the testing.

Group 21. Twelve boys and forty-seven girls, nine to fourteen years of age, from a Harlem, Negro, week-day religious school, New York City.

II. THE SCORES: THEIR MEANING AND PURPOSE

The C–L, or Conservative-Liberal score, is derived from responses to forty statements classified by raters as either conservative or liberal and varying in weight according to assigned value and their differentiating power. A plus score indicates the preponderance of liberal values over conservative values, while a minus score shows the preponderance of conservative values over liberal values.

O, or Objectionable score, represents the degree of acceptance of statements which express ideas undesirable to all Protestant factions. On the C–L test a minus score is as desirable to some as a plus score is to others, but a minus O score is evidence of Orthodoxy from the standpoint of most Protestants. High O scores are therefore undesirable. The O score is a valuable check on the C–L score.

E, or Ethical score, is supposed to reveal the ethical character of all the ideas, conservative, liberal, and objectionable, which individual children accept as true. S, or Scientific score, shows the degree to which these selections are, from the standpoint of the religious leaders rating the items in the test, in harmony with known facts and scientific hypotheses, apart from the assumed existence of God. The rating has determined a strong relationship between high C–L scores and E and S scores, because all three are based in part on the same statements. Still the items in these tests vary so in value that the E and S scores were considered necessary checks on the selection of ideas made.

The I score indicates inconsistency. Here a zero score is the lowest, and the most desirable that can be obtained. This score

shows the extent to which a child has been discriminating in his selection of ideas.

III. WHAT THE SCORES REVEAL

Figures I to X contain sufficient data to show:

1. The general level of achievement of all children in terms of medians and extreme scores.
2. The variation of the medians of individual groups from the median of all combined.
3. The comparative performance of each group.
4. Typical individual profiles.
5. The relation of scores on any one test, roughly, to those on all other tests.

The central tendency of the responses of all children combined on the C-L test (Figure I) can be little less than disappointing to all teachers of religion with decidedly strong liberal or conservative leanings. The median of –12 shows a general leaning to conservatism, but the point is probably farther removed from the conservative extreme than might be expected. Those who fear the influence of liberalism on the religious thinking of children will find cause for anxiety here. But the fact that only six groups show medians above the zero level and that these vary widely from the general level of achievement may be a source of comfort to both factions: to the conservative because there is an indication that the majority of the groups are more conservative, and to the liberals because the oustanding performance of a few groups suggests real possibilities, particularly when it happens that the groups making strong liberal showing are those which have been described as having been under the influence of specifically liberal teaching. The work of group 16 is particularly outstanding. In only seven groups did even the highest scores exceed the median of this group. This group is known to have been, in a special way, under the influence of liberal teachers. Groups 18, 19, and 20 are also known to have been for a time favored with unusually competent liberal leadership. Groups 1 and 2 have made a similar liberal showing. It will be necessary to check the work of these groups on all tests before their comparative merits can be discussed.

An interesting fact is that, although a few groups only make

a noteworthy liberal showing, the extreme scores in each group show the presence of strongly liberal minded children in most groups. Only in groups 10 and 15 did all children receive minus scores. On the other hand, all groups show strong conservative or minus scores.

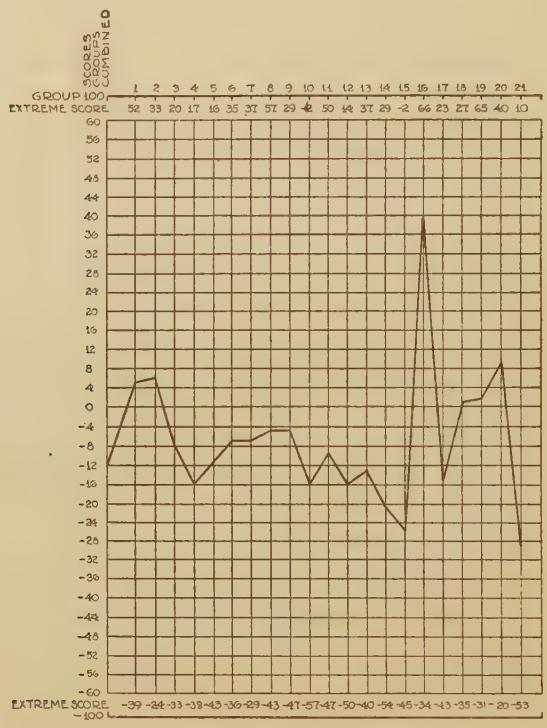


FIGURE I

COMPARISON OF GROUPS IN TERMS OF CENTRAL TENDENCY OF LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCORES

Groups 15 and 21 are the most conservative. Group 21 is made up of Negro children and group 15 is composed of children who were reported by their teacher to be, with the exception of two, slightly below normal in intelligence. Next to these come groups 14, 10, 12, and 13. Which group has done the best work from the standpoint of conservatism will depend upon their showing on the other tests.

Examination of the medians on the O test as shown in Figure II should not be disheartening to religious leaders except in a few cases. The medians of all but two fall below the zero level. Groups 15 and 17 show the greatest tendency to objectionable

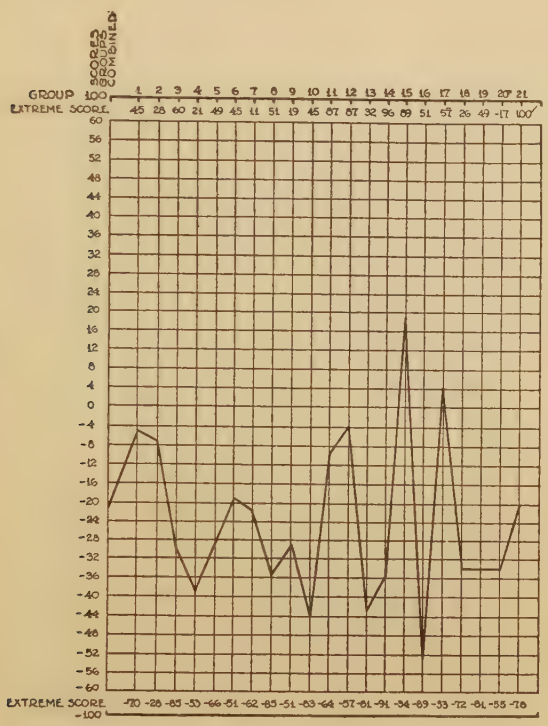


FIGURE II

COMPARISON OF GROUPS IN TERMS OF CENTRAL TENDENCY OF OBJECTIONABLE SCORES

opinions. The work of these groups and the wide variation in individual scores on the O test nevertheless show that much work awaits teachers of religion in the field of objectionable ideas.

It will be noted that some of the groups making the highest scores on the C-L test swing in opposite directions on the O test. Groups 1 and 2 receive high O scores as well as high C-L scores, while groups 16, 18, 19, and 20 are among those making the lowest O scores. Group 16 is again outstanding in its variation

from the general performance. The crossing of scores may also be noted in the work of the groups which tended strongly to conservatism. Group 12 shows a high O median while 10 and 13, almost equally conservative though not conspicuously so, make

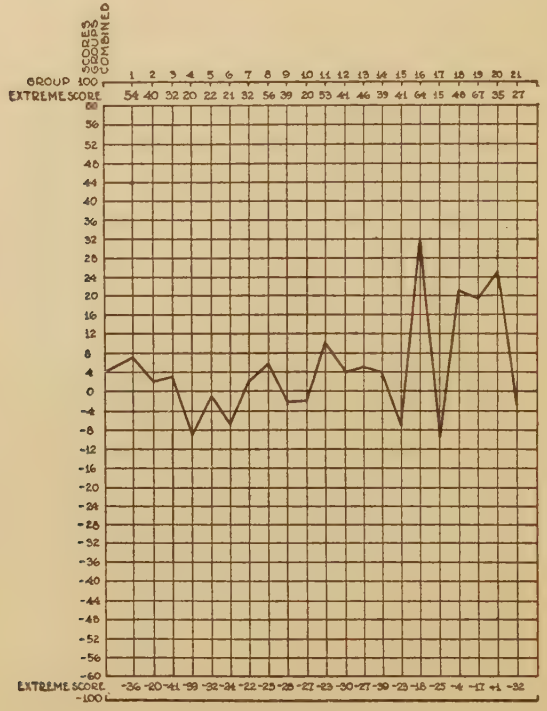


FIGURE III

Comparison of Groups in Terms of Central Tendency of Ethical Scores

the lowest medians but one on O. So far there is no clear indication that high O scores are more characteristic of liberal groups than of conservative groups, or vice versa.

E scores (Figure III) centralize in the neighborhood of zero with comparatively little variation from this in the medians of individual groups except those already twice referred to, namely, groups 16, 18, 19, and 20, with 16 occupying a lone position as before. Though groups 1 and 2 made as good a showing on the C–L test as did 18 and 19, they go considerably higher on the

O test and very much lower on the E test on which they are but slightly above the median of all groups combined. This shows that the reactions of children in 1 and 2, although equally liberal, were less guarded from the standpoint of orthodoxy and

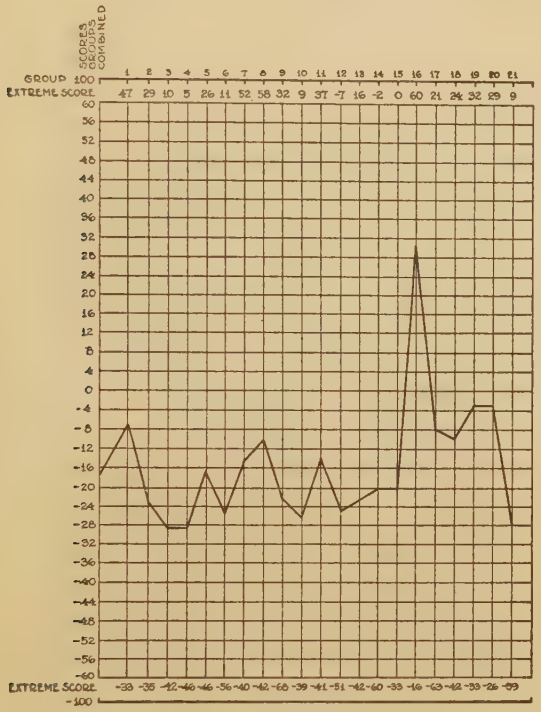


FIGURE IV

COMPARISON OF GROUPS IN TERMS OF CENTRAL TENDENCY OF SCIENTIFIC SCORES

less ethically discriminating. Groups 17, 15, 21, 4 and 6 make the poorest showing. Two of these, namely, 15 and 21, were outstandingly conservative, while they at the same time made the highest and least desirable O scores. Group 21 makes an average showing on this test.

The median of all S scores (Figure IV) is down to –18 which is much lower than on the E test. Even most of the strongly liberal groups make less desirable scores than they did on the E test. This reveals a situation parallel to that found in the

curricula examined, namely, that questions of fact and the cautious character of scientific thinking enter but slightly into religious thinking. Groups 16, 18, 19, and 20 make a comparatively high showing as usual, with group 1 again coming to the fore, and group 17 showing up well for the first time.

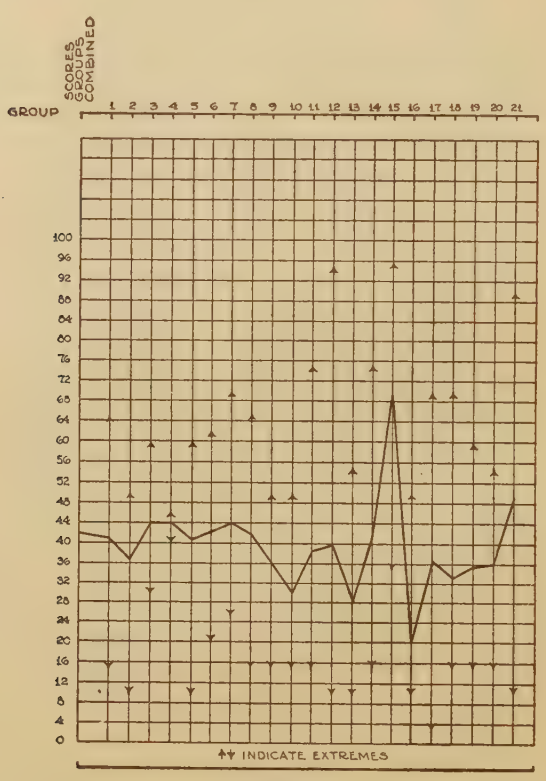


FIGURE V

COMPARISON OF GROUPS IN TERMS OF CENTRAL TENDENCY OF INCONSISTENCY SCORES

Figure V shows that on the I test there are some strong variations from the median for all children. Groups 16, 10, and 13 make the lowest and best showing, and groups 15 and 21 make the poorest showing. It will be remembered that 15 and 21 went strongly conservative, but so did 10 and 13. Groups 18, 19, and 20 fall a little on the safe side of the median for all children.

If the information given about the various groups is now recalled, it will help in explaining some of the outstanding differences found in groups. Group 16 occupies a lone position on all tests. This group has been associated for years, as has already

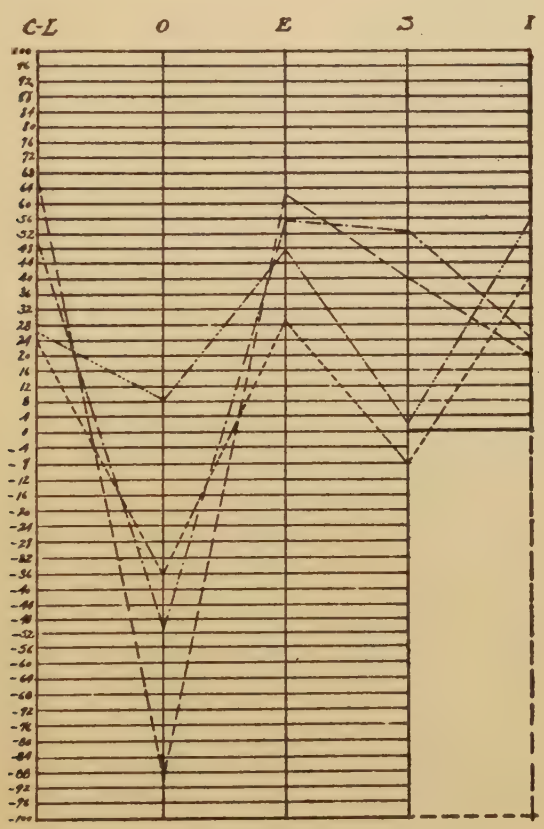


FIGURE VI

TYPICAL PROFILES OF PUPILS LEANING STRONGLY TO LIBERALISM

been said, with a liberal church, and has had the advantage of skilled church school leadership. Groups 18, 19, and 20 are all from the same school, and rank closely together on all tests, as might be expected. While on some tests, i.e., O and I, some other groups showed up to better advantage, groups 18, 19 and 20 are most like group 16 in general performance. They are strongly

liberal, next to 16 on the E and S tests, well below the average on the O test, and somewhat below it on the I test. It will be remembered that these groups had also received skilled liberal leadership, though only for a comparatively short time and under adverse circumstances.

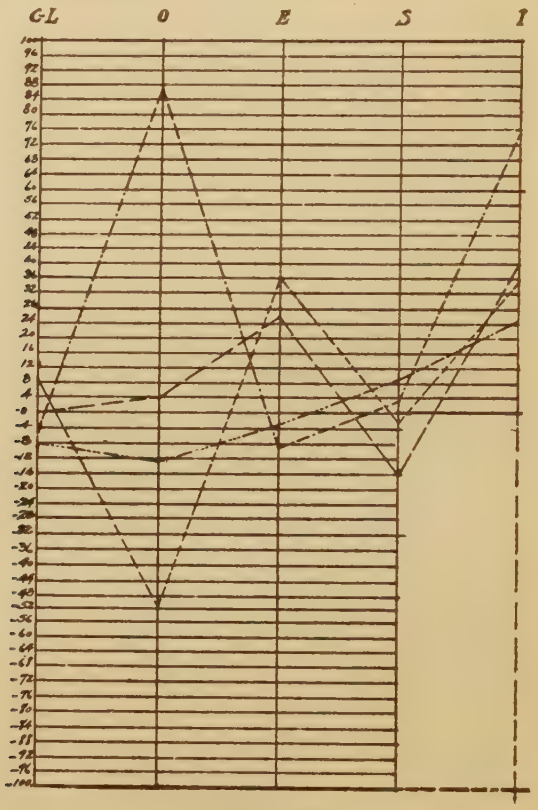


FIGURE VII

TYPICAL PROFILES OF PUPILS WHOSE C-L SCORES FALL IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF ZERO

From the standpoint of conservatism, groups 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 21 challenge attention. None of these could make a strong showing on the E and S tests because of the fact that some of the same statements were used in these tests as were used in the C–L test, but their comparative performance can be noted. Judged from this standpoint, groups 10 and 13 have

made the most desirable showing. On the O and I tests they excel all groups except 16. This indicates that among the conservative groups they show the greatest amount of consistency and the least inclination to the acceptance of undesirable or objectionable ideas.

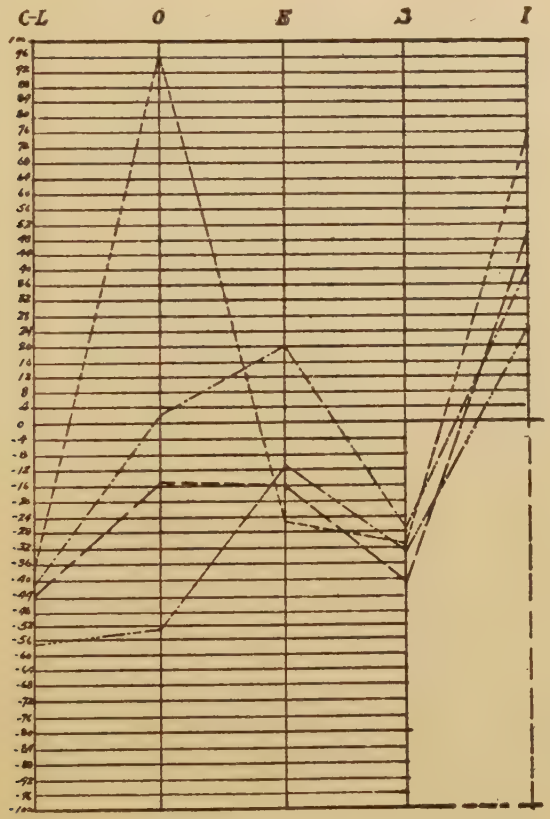


FIGURE VIII

TYPICAL PROFILES OF PUPILS LEANING STRONGLY TO CONSERVATISM

Group 15 needs special study. It was reported that the children in this group were for the most part below normal in intelligence, and this may be taken as the explanation of their poor showing on the O and I tests. This probably holds for the I test to some extent. The interesting fact is that the inability to be

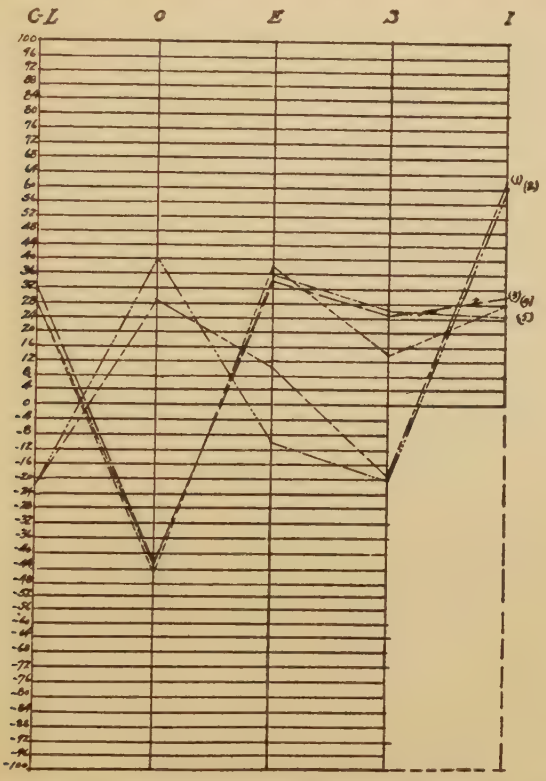
consistent and discriminating in some respects did not prevent the children in this group from making one of the two lowest C–L medians. They knew enough to reject ideas that were distinctly liberal. As already pointed out, the O test contains a majority of ideas of naïve character which would seem to be perfectly orthodox to such children. Reference to the percentage agreeing with each item in the O test shows that the ideas usually called false by these children were those expressing unbelief. The traditional and childish ideas which have been rated in this test as objectionable to all Protestant factions have never been feared in conservative groups as have tendencies to liberalism or heresy. It is reasonable to conclude that we have here some clear evidence of the effect of teaching, and that these children could make a much better showing on the O test if their teachers made the elimination of objectionable ideas one of their specific objectives.

Group 21, composed of Negro children, is most like group 15 in general performance. The median of this group on the O test is nevertheless on a level with that of all children combined. In this respect the group is distinctly superior to group 15.

No special tendency can be found in any of the other groups by the method of treatment adopted.

The question of the relation of scores on the various tests must now be faced. The predetermined relation of the C–L, E, and S scores has already been mentioned. This relation can be given too much weight. That the work on any one of these tests does not need to parallel the work on the others can be seen by a comparison of the medians for groups 1, 2, 18, and 19. Scores on the C–L, O, and I tests may, however, be compared with perfect fairness and without danger of misinterpretation. Is there any indication that objectionable beliefs or inconsistencies go more with one extreme of the C–L test than with the other? On the basis of the data already reviewed, we can say that the highest O and I scores were made by the group making the lowest C–L scores, and that the lowest O and I scores were made by the group scoring highest on the C–L test. At the same time, the next most desirable scores on the O and I tests were made by two groups with a slightly greater-than-average leaning to conservatism. It was also noted that groups 1 and 2, though strongly liberal, made unusually high O scores. We might therefore con-

clude that there is no observable relation between the scores on the bases of group performances. Liberalism and conservatism are both sufficiently common in all groups to make it impossible to see by the comparison of groups any relation that might



(1) Medians of scores made by fifty awarded highest I scores
(2) Medians of fifty awarded highest O scores
(3) Medians of fifty awarded highest C–L scores
(4) Medians of fifty awarded highest E scores
(5) Medians of fifty awarded highest S scores

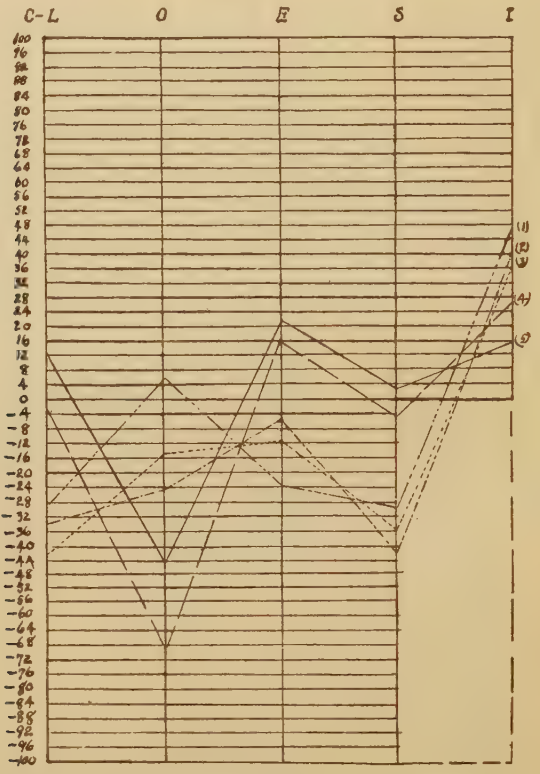
FIGURE IX

THE CENTRAL TENDENCIES OF SCORES MADE BY THE FIFTY PUPILS RANKING HIGHEST ON EACH TEST

exist between the conservative and liberal extremes and the other scores awarded.

To get a more accurate answer to the question, it is necessary to study Figures VI to X. Figures VI, VII, and VIII show the

typical profiles of individuals making high, medium, and low scores on the C–L test. Figure VI shows that individuals with strong liberal leanings make O scores ranging from slightly above the middle point to – 88 with a majority of the profiles showing



(1) Medians of scores made by fifty awarded lowest E scores
(2) Medians of fifty awarded lowest S scores
(3) Medians of fifty awarded lowest C–L (= highest C) scores
(4) Medians of fifty awarded lowest O scores
(5) Medians of fifty awarded lowest I scores

FIGURE X

THE CENTRAL TENDENCIES OF SCORES MADE BY THE FIFTY PUPILS RANKING LOWEST ON EACH TEST

O scores below the zero level. There is no clear-cut position on the I test, scores being both high and low without swinging widely to either extreme. Individuals scoring near zero on the C–L test (Figure VII) make every variety of score on the other

tests under consideration. Individuals leaning strongly to the conservative extreme (Figure VIII) sometimes make extremely high O and I scores, and sometimes comparatively low scores. The lowest extremes shown here on the O and I tests are reached by individuals making high C–L scores, while the highest O and I scores are made by conservatives. This suggests the necessity of selecting the fifty pupils ranking highest and the fifty ranking lowest on each test for comparison. Figures IX and X show the medians of each of these groups along with their medians on each of the other tests. Figure IX shows how closely the highest C–L, E, and S scores go together. The medians of the fifty coming highest on each of these tests are almost identical, the greatest variation being on the S test. Along with these go medians on the O and I tests which are well below the O and I medians for all children. The profiles of the groups ranking highest on the O and I tests seem also to keep company. They strike the C–L scale almost at the same point that the median for all children fell. They fall below the general level on E and about at the general level on S. Those scoring highest on O reach a median position on I which is almost identical with the median of the fifty highest I scores.

The profiles of groups occupying the lowest extremes are more baffling and more varied in character. (See Figure X.) The lowest and most desirable O scores centralize on the C–L test at zero and the I scores are a little higher. The same positions are approximated on the E and S tests. The children making the most consistent and orthodox (from a general standpoint) responses are far from being identical with the highest scorers on the C–L, E, and S tests, though they seem slightly inclined in the same direction. On the other hand, those making the lowest C–L scores show a median on the O test slightly inferior to, or higher than, that of all children combined, and make a median on the I test slightly lower, or superior to, that of all combined. The differences between these medians and those of all children combined is negligible. The same groups fall far below the general level on the E and S tests.

To summarize, those making the most liberal showing make a showing on the O and I tests much superior to the average performance, while those showing the greatest tendency to conservatism take an approximately average position on the same

tests. The best, or lowest, scorers on the O and I tests do not court either extreme on the C–L test. The poorest performers on these tests (those making the highest scores) incline strongly to the conservative extreme on the C–L test, but do not reach the position of the most conservative group. We may conclude from this that children scoring highest on the C–L test are more on their guard against irregularities of belief, from a general standpoint, than are those making the lowest scores, and tend to be more consistent in their reactions. This may be due to superior teaching methods among the liberals rather than to the nature of the content of the teaching.

There seems to be very little difference in the achievements of different age groups. The nine-year-old children do a little less well than the other age groups. The differences between the other groups are negligible. The mean score of all nine-year-olds on the C–L test is — 15; of twelve-year-olds, — 7; and of fourteen-year-olds, — 10. The nine-year-old mean on the E test is — 1; the twelve-year-old, + 4; and the fourteen-year-old, + 9. On the S test, the relations are exactly similar. On the O test, the mean nine-year-old score is — 2; the mean twelve-year-old score, — 20; and the mean fourteen-year-old score, — 24. The greatest differences are found in the O scores. The number of nine-year-olds is, however, so small, being only seven per cent of all the children tested, that the mean scores credited to them here might vary greatly if a larger number were tested.

In addition to the above, it is found that the different age groups are represented among the children making extreme scores with practically the same relative frequency.

The difference between the work of the sexes is not any greater. Of all the children tested, forty-two per cent are boys and fifty-eight per cent are girls. Of the fifty children scoring highest on the C–L test, forty-two per cent are boys and fifty-eight per cent are girls. Of the fifty making the lowest C–L scores, thirty-eight per cent are boys and sixty-two per cent are girls.

There is, of course, no evidence that any one denominational group makes a better or a poorer showing than the others. It would be unfair to attempt a comparison of the performances of denominational groups on the basis of the data presented here, for the children tested are not sufficiently representative of the denominations.

CHAPTER VII

HOW CAN TEACHING ABOUT GOD BE IMPROVED?

The analysis of the teaching about God and of some of its results just completed should now be considered with a view to discovering, if possible, how such teaching can be improved. It is sometimes considered the function of a survey merely to disclose the facts. If this be true the present study will have to be considered as slightly different from the usual survey, for its very nature calls for the review of the outstanding findings in terms of constructive purpose. An extensive offering of suggestions can scarcely be presented upon the basis of a particular study without referring also to many other studies. The suggestions offered will, therefore, be few in number, and as closely based upon the findings of this study as possible. Assumptions may be made and opinions offered, because they are unavoidable, but it is the author's intention to label them as such.

It is possible that some teachers of religion will not be in the least alarmed by the situation disclosed, or that they will at least consider a drastic change of policy needless or even hazardous. To such, this final chapter will be of little interest or value. But it is assumed that many will be, and in fact it is known that many are, dissatisfied with the results of present teaching. It is to these that the following pages are primarily addressed.

What are the outstanding needs? The question must be answered from several standpoints:

First, from the point of view of liberalism in general, *one of the outstanding needs is a revision of biblical teaching that will include more of the known facts about the Bible. This scarcely need be said after the treatment of the subject given in earlier chapters, but it is the intention here to emphasize the need even at the risk of monotonous repetition.* All liberals who classify themselves as such wish children ultimately to be given the truth about the Bible, if they recommend the Bible at all as particularly essential. The points of view expressed in almost any issue

of *Religious Education* justify this conclusion. The truth about the Bible, and particularly about New Testament narratives, as liberals see it, was found to be given but meager expression in the Sunday school literature reviewed; and the findings of the tests used conclusively prove that few children have more than a vague and uncertain acquaintance with it. There is, therefore, a great need for a factual statement of biblical history and content. The purpose of such a statement would not be to moralize upon biblical texts. The drawing of lessons for conduct and belief has heretofore been combined with Bible study at the expense of fearless and clear-cut statements of fact. If the treatment of the Exodus found in one or two texts of the Chicago University Series was extended to the entire Bible, the need would be fairly well met. One objection from liberals will be—and this is on the basis of facts previously cited—that they fear to raise problems for children. This fear of difficulties implies that the children referred to have already been taught what is known to be untrue, and an examination of the primary texts of even the Constructive Series gives ample justification for the fear. But why teach what is untrue? The excuse may be offered that children will not understand or appreciate the truth. But is this a valid reason for assisting them in acquiring mistaken notions? It is also felt by many that the Bible contains values that young children will profit by, though at the same time children would be confused by a critical approach to the Bible. The approach need not be critical. It can be a plain statement of the best we know. If such a statement nullifies the values referred to, it is safe to conclude that they are largely imaginary. If these materials carry values they can be dissociated from misrepresentations of the known facts of life. If the Bible is not needed by very young children, then, it is clearly the duty of liberals to postpone the teaching of it until it can be of service to them. Here again a practical situation must be faced. There is good reason to believe that young children will pick up erroneous ideas about the Bible and God at home and from their associates. It would seem, then, that teachers will have to make a particular point of forestalling mistaken ideas and harmful attitudes. Tests now available can assist teachers in unearthing the seeds of error. If the Bible is to be used, a much more judicious selection can be made than is available at present. Hugh H.

Harris' *Leaders of Israel,* a new text in the International Series, gives new promise both for selected content and for method.

A particularly difficult situation arises when the child's parent objects to liberal teaching. On such occasions the church and the teacher are faced with this dilemma: the child needs "the truth" and the church should teach "nothing but the truth"; and at the same time the parent cannot be disregarded, for the church needs both parent and child. Is a compromise the solution? The liberal contributions to religious curricula examined exhibit as tactful a compromise with old ideas as can be devised, and it is with this very situation that most dissatisfaction is expressed. It seems that if the problem is to be solved one of two procedures must be followed:

In a crisis the church or teacher can go on the assumption that the church's integrity must be safeguarded, and that in any case the relations of a religious institution to a child are, because of that child's possibilities, more sacred than the preservation of peace with the parent; and that in the long run a policy built upon this principle will result in more effective teaching. Some children will be lost but just as many who now are lost to the church may be induced to return. This would result in a sharper demarcation between liberal and less liberal schools, and it seems reasonable to suppose that such demarcation is inevitable if teaching is to be straightforward, sincere, and uncompromising. If, on the other hand, the peace-at-any-price policy is to be maintained, it is clear that progress can only come when room is made for the parent in the church school, and both parent and child are improved together. There is ample material available for the enlightenment of parents if churches have the will to use it. Fosdick's *The Modern Use of the Bible* is a sample. Any one of the standard works on the person of Christ, such as Gilbert's *Jesus,* could also be used, and there is every reason why an edition of some such book for use with children and young people should be prepared.

Secondly, *there is need for a similar advance in the teaching of the known facts of nature.* The church has undertaken to teach nature lessons to children. They were seen to be sentimental in the extreme, evasive, and even misleading. Such lessons are used not for the sake of the subject itself but as evidence of God's love and power. Appeal to expert naturalists is scarcely neces-

sary to show that such a treatment of nature inevitably results in the omission of some of life's most significant facts. If the assumption is reasonably justified by facts that a knowledge of birds, bees, ants, and fishes is a bulwark to faith, the first thing that should be done is to secure some standard works on these subjects, which are prepared for children, and to use them. The church could well afford to adopt this policy, for abundant material from the hands of qualified naturalists can be found in almost any bookshop. The publications of the Natural History Museum, New York City, the Audubon Society, and the National Geographic Society are thoroughly reliable. If such literature supplies a child with facts of value for the building up of an enduring faith, the church could supplement it with commentaries to throw such values in high relief. The field work recommended by the societies mentioned could also be adopted by the church to good advantage. A year ago a week-day church school in New York City gave several weeks to nature lessons. Plants were placed on the window sills, bird and animal stories were told, and pictures were exhibted. One day each week children were kept from two to two and one-half hours in an old, dark building where artificial light always had to be used to hear and see this program. At the same time—this was the first half of the month of May—Central Park was swarming with migrating birds. This situation is believed to be typical and serves to show the need of frequently substituting the out-of-doors for the classroom. It was also noted that the theory of evolution was entirely overlooked in the selection of textbooks read. Liberal teachers who believe the theory to be of value for the growth of religious thought could use, for example, Van Loon's *The Story of Mankind*. In brief, if the church is to continue the use of theories of nature and the origin of life as part of its teaching, it is to the interest of liberals that the best material available be secured, and it is unreasonable to suppose that such materials can be prepared to advantage by professional religious leaders. It would be unnecessary in any case, for excellent material is already available.

If, however, the habit of appealing to the facts of life is to become central in religious teaching, some far-reaching revisions of theology are necessary no matter how much or how little freedom is given to children in interpreting life for themselves. The

literature reviewed shows that Protestantism has lost sufficient of its naïveté to be able to disregard some of the most significant facts of life—the hard facts which once were explained in terms of evil spiritual powers and which now endanger belief in an omnipotent God of infinite goodness. Can Protestant theology advance to the point where it will again attempt to explain these facts on a higher plane? Will this not be necessary in the long run if the church hopes to assist children in making more permanent adjustments to life? For the church to continue to evade the facts is to admit the inadequacy of its teaching. Jeanette Perkins' contributions to Sunday school literature contain the only attempt to deal fairly with this problem. Her interpretations are a real beginning, but they need to be pushed much further. The attack upon the problem is more interesting and encouraging than the results. Frequently the problem under discussion is mentioned in pulpits and sometimes dismissed as nonexistent. If this be true, a clear-cut analysis of the facts to support this contention is necessary to aid those who are less capable of seeing the truth for themselves.

It can be said with less confidence that liberals in general are committed to the duty of supplying their people, and particularly their children, with a knowledge of the outstanding problems confronting society, or even to the belief that social issues are in any way the concern of religion. On this question a division among liberals can be assumed. It can, however, be said with certainty that a group of liberals are so committed. Reference to but one issue of the *Journal of Religious Education* (January, 1929) will furnish conclusive proof of this, and many other articles and books could be cited as further evidence. Are the outcomes desired by this group being realized? The question has already been answered in so far as textbooks are concerned. Many have predicted that in the future social issues and personal problems will replace the Bible and theology as subject matter for the Sunday school class, and there is some justification for the prediction if it is made to refer only to a minority of liberal churches. Texts prepared by *The Inquiry,* by E. L. Shaver, and a few others illustrate this new tendency. But most of the work in this field is yet to be done. It cannot be that more than an insignificant minority of adolescents now attending Sunday schools use the texts mentioned. Children of the elementary

grades are not "let in" at all on the actual situation—not even being allowed to suspect the infallibility of the daily newspaper. There is need, therefore, that this type of material be extended to many more fields. It seems also reasonable that if adolescents are to be given the hard facts of social conditions some preparation for this must be made in the elementary grades. A beginning has been made in extending to the lower grades the type of teaching referred to in Edna M. Bonser's text, *Building the Golden Rule City*. This at least will acquaint children with the problematic nature of social living and aid in building constructive attitudes.

In addition, ways and means of assisting teachers and school directors in getting at the facts can be devised. A sample suggestion can be made. Institutions or organizations that have been set up to meet specific social ills can be used as sources of information. Of such institutions there are many in America; for example, The Civil Liberties Union, The Fellowship of Reconciliation, The Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and The League for Industrial Democracy. It would be of advantage to the type of liberal mentioned to cooperate closely with such organizations.

Liberal leaders could also be of service to teachers by giving assistance in evaluating the flood of propagandist materials on social issues that the last few years have brought forth in the form of books, pamphlets, and newspaper and magazine articles.

The "Information Service" conducted by more than one church organization could also be specifically intended and adapted for Sunday school use.

The above suggestions are important in view of the fact that compilations of sociological facts that would be useful in liberal schools would be out of date before they could be extensively advertised.

On the question of the method of interpreting and evaluating ascertained facts and points of view, a division among liberals may be taken for granted. The modified liberalism found in curricula shows no great faith in the capacities of children for judging facts, evaluating social conditions, or making careful choices. Such liberal teachers know the truth, and they regard children as recipients of this truth. They may be classed with conservative literalists as "rigidists," to use a term now in vogue.

These have taken upon themselves the responsibility of interpreting life in the spirit of the creeds without the sanction of the creeds. They have chosen the harder part. Little more can be said for them than to call attention to the facts disclosed, namely, the tendency to evasiveness and confusion, with all their consequent evils, found in textbooks written in this dogmatic spirit. Also, the lack of consistency and discrimination found in children's thinking. If these moderate liberals are to present a full-blown gospel to children, it must be more thoroughly systematized and more thoroughly differentiated from the old gospel which it is intended to supplant. Such leaders should see the danger of contradictions in the contributions of different writers and attempt to coöperate only with their own sort in preparing a complete and consistent set of fundamentals.

But other liberals express a good deal more confidence in the child's powers, and considerably less confidence in their own interpretations of life. To these, facts, together with the best interpretations of them, need the challenging and refining scrutiny of young minds; and young minds need, above all things, the experience of honest, discriminating, and thoroughgoing thinking. To these, the primary essentials are the truth plus a healthy and ethical give-and-take between old and young learners. The method they espouse has been given little assistance from publishers, and practically all the helps that have appeared have been from nonsectarian publishers. This fact alone is indicative of future possible sources of guidance. The chief difficulty confronted by these liberals is that they need ideas, suggestions, and technique, but not texts to be followed. Some of the newer texts that have appeared, such as Sailer's *What Does Christ Expect of Young People of Today?* are excellent stories of the experiences of particular groups of children. But such texts cannot be used unmodified in any group, and many who have tried to use them have met with discouragement for this reason. This suggests that the movement under discussion will be chiefly nurtured by schools for the training of teachers such as are found at Teachers College and Union Seminary in New York City. If the child psychology and the teaching methods that are particularly emphasized in such schools are sufficiently "aboveboard," they will attract students, pastors, teachers, and directors who need them. But there is no

need of complete dependence upon certain training schools. More can be done in making the experiences of successful teachers available than has been done heretofore. For example, some very successful teaching, judged by the standards of this group, has been accomplished in many local centers, the records of which are available to only a few. The local exhibits of teachers' notebooks and the creative efforts of children made at the Park Avenue Baptist Church and at Union Theological Seminary, New York City, indicate that there must be a wealth of such material scattered throughout the country. There is no reason why the "Religious Education Association," which has done much to promote the type of teaching under discussion, should not make a very valuable collection of such materials for exhibition at its international conventions. Such an exhibit could be loaned to local centers.

It would be profitable also for this group of liberals to give special attention to the work and literature of the progressive "secular" schools. Several of these schools have made advances in methods for freeing children for creative effort that have been surprising to all educators acquainted with them. Because of the lack of freedom, money, and equipment necessary for experimentation in local churches, it seems reasonable that the contributions of progressive schools could be more definitely recognized and steps taken to accelerate the spread of methods they are applying to literature and the arts into the field of religion. Progressive schools are found in many parts of the country, and in other countries as well. At present The Progressive Education Association is the outstanding clearing house in America for information concerning their work.

The educational points of view referred to in these paragraphs should not be confused with the so-called discussion method. The latter in its popularized form is one of the offshoots of a more progressive movement. Too frequently group discussion is not conducted according to the principles of its chief spokesman and might better be described as free talk than as a cooperative attack upon real problems involving thought and study. The popularization of the method in this modified form, illustrates the church's constant temptation to be up-to-date without seriously changing its policies. Nevertheless, the element of freedom in the method has given religious educators a real

opportunity. It at least sets the stage for a coöperative effort to learn, when competent leadership is available.

Another need evidenced by this study is for a drastic revision of devotional materials now in common use. However little advance liberals have made in providing materials for the classroom, they have provided still less for the reconstruction of the service of worship. That these devotional materials are effective in teaching ideas which are frowned upon by most liberals is fairly clear. The belief that God sits on a throne above the clouds is never intentionally taught by liberals or even by the more conservative textbook writers. Yet an astonishing percentage of children accept the idea as true. Their chief contact in Sunday schools with this belief is through devotional literature. It may be argued that this does not prove the point made, since such ideas are frequently picked up or taught at home or in the streets. Granting this, it cannot be argued that devotional materials do not give churchly confirmation to such crudities. There is, therefore, every justification for the call for a revision of hymnals and prayers, etc. The difficulty may be partly met for very young children by the greater use of songs with nature themes, such as have been included in the compilation by Miss Baker called *Songs for the Little Child* (Abingdon Press). These can be profitably substituted for such hymns as Luther's famous "Dear Little Lord Jesus," until more suitable theistic songs are prepared to supplement the few already existing.

Little more can be offered to liberals by way of suggestion that would be fully justified by the nature and purpose of this study. The study has raised many questions which cannot be answered here, but which suggest the extent to which liberal territory is still unexplored. For example: If godliness is best learned through fellowship with those who are most concerned with the world's ills, is it wise to have no mention in Sunday school texts of such people as Florence Kelley, Eugene Debs, Judge Brandeis, Dean Pound, Dr. Jackson of Philadelphia, Gandhi, or even "Golden Rule" Nash?

Is it the intention of liberals to continue to present Jesus to children as a God to be worshiped?

If liberal religionists are to encourage freedom of thought, is it assumed that all youth will ultimately come to accept a

theistic interpretation of life? If not, are some to be excluded from the fellowship of the church or is provision to be made whereby the godless and the prayerless can remain in it? This question will, of course, not concern the so-called "humanists."

If it is the intention of some liberals to keep the minds and emotions of children as free as possible from thwarting conditioning, is the present emphasis upon training the child in devotional life conducive to this end, when it is the intention to have the child live for and by a conception of God which is admittedly inadequate for his maturity?

Some facts may be gleaned from this study that may serve the ends of those who are conservative enough to emphasize belief in the inspired nature of scripture and in the creedal bases of the churches and to fear or discountenance science. There is clear-cut evidence that even children with strong leanings to conservative extremes accept many ideas that are distinctly modernist in character. Both conservative and liberal children were seen to accept many ideas of objectionable nature and ideas which were mutually exclusive in character. Both liberal and conservative teachers are therefore faced with the common problem of making children more discriminating in their thinking. Liberals were recommended to make use of known facts about life and the Bible and to utilize the spirit and findings of scientific research, for such are calculated to lead children more and more away from conservatism to the acceptance of standards of thought and knowledge dominant in the scholastic and scientific world. While conservatives are confronted with the same problem they will find it more difficult to handle, since they have every reason to fear the ideas of scientists, philosophers, modernists, and theologians, and what these represent as safe assumptions or as ascertained fact. The basic standards and assumptions and attitudes whereby conservative thinking is determined must be thoroughly ingrained. The protection of these fundamentals has been attempted by legal restraint with partial success, but as yet large areas of the country cannot be so restrained. In any case, it is safe to seek every other possible means of safeguarding youth, whether legal restraint is regarded as necessary or not. Professor Leuba and others long ago disclosed the fact that children are astonishingly ignorant of the doctrines of their churches. The present study

shows that children are astonishingly weak in discriminative ability. Liberal, conservative, and heretical ideas frequently keep company, and that, even when many of them are contradictory. The fault is with the teaching and not with the children. There is, therefore, need for a more rigorous drill in the basic assumptions of traditional Christianity. This is but recognizing the need to do more effectively what has always been attempted. The easy access of children in modern times to ideas that offset their religious training gives a new character to the old problem that suggests the need for a courageous change of policy on the part of conservative Christianity. The method that has been sanctioned throughout history for waylaying heresy is to silence the heretic. The forces of conservatism still use the method, but there is far less promise of its success, since it is much more difficult for us in modern times to muzzle our neighbors. It is therefore suggested that along with the grounding in the fundamentals specific attention be given in Sunday schools to the refutation of modernist and heretical ideas. This is seen as a necessary supplement to the teaching of doctrines because of the likelihood of the child's future contact with ideas that challenge his faith, and which he is not prepared to meet. The teaching of the churches' doctrines has therefore a twofold character. Certain devices may be suggested for the conservation of a child's faith.

First, the discovery of the mechanism of the associative reflex, though a product of scientific investigation, has placed a powerful instrument in the hands of the orthodox teacher if he cares to use it consciously and deliberately. How can this mechanism be controlled in the interest of conservatism? By the simple though expensive and painstaking device of associating the happiness of children more specifically with the ideas to be inculcated. That there is an opportunity for this need scarcely be argued. Even children of the most tender years are frequently housed in church basements for the study of theology and in rooms that are frequently disorderly, untidy, drab, and uninteresting. Few churches have supplied their children with furniture and equipment suitable for the tasks assigned them or calculated to give them delight. The churches can, by the spending of more money for equipment and for decorative skill, enhance the happiness of their children and thereby the chances of

making their teaching more effective. In many churches at the present time the association of boredom and unhappiness with Sunday school work operates against the aims of the churches. It is particularly important that parents and friends around whom the child's first sentiments are built up should be conspicuous in the environment in which the child receives his teaching. Recent studies have found the influence of the home to be particularly effective in determining the thoughts and attitudes of children. It is equally effective in implanting religious ideas. Ideas taught and believed by those whom we love most dearly and whom we admire for genuineness of character and sincerity of purpose are the most difficult to lose. Teachers who lay stress upon such conditioning as is here suggested should be warned that, unless completely successful, they are storing up trouble for their children, for if a break must be made by a child so conditioned it is likely to be accompanied by great distress.

Some of the very devices of educational research can be profitably employed by conservatives. The tests produced in this book can be used to detect leanings to heresy, modernism, and crudities of thought. Such use of the test or similar tests will sharpen objectives to the extent of revealing the specific ideas that teaching has failed to impart and the ideas that have been acquired through misunderstanding or through extraschool contacts. It will be particularly useful if the foregoing suggestion to inoculate against undesirable ideas by specific attack upon them is adopted. Some conservatives, and even some who call themselves liberals, have refrained from using such tests because of the suggestive power of undesirable ideas found in them. The assumption is that when a child reads such ideas he will be induced to believe them. There is no justification for this assumption if proper educational precautions are taken. For example, the conservative ideas in the test particularly referred to outnumber the liberal ideas two to one. Going on the assumption mentioned the outcome should be altogether in favor of conservatism, and such a test given to children of modernists should do effective missionary work. If it is maintained that this does not hold, then we have to fall back upon the doctrine of natural depravity and say that heretical and dangerous ideas take root with greater ease; and if this doctrine is not accepted it must be admitted that heretical

and modernist ideas are so self-evidently true that their influence outweighs that of all others. If the tests are used for purposes of diagnosis and immediate steps are taken to correct error, they can serve conservatives as well as liberals.

Tests on biblical content, like those prepared by Professor Mary T. Whitley of Columbia University, would be serviceable and free from the dangers for which the idea tests are feared. It is also conceivable that many tests more in keeping with the aims of conservatives could be devised.

No matter what precautions are taken in childhood, conservatism must be ready to combat modernism and science in the interest of children who are approaching manhood and womanhood. Scholarly statements can be prepared to weaken the faith of youth in science, but they can only be prepared by those who are thoroughly acquainted with science. Portions of Canon Streetor's *Reality* would admirably serve the cause of orthodoxy.

The examination of Sunday school literature reveals that it is a very common habit among contributors to apply scientific method to certain subjects and to abandon it in the consideration of certain others. The acceptance of the findings of scientists about planets contrasted with the prevailing silence on the subject of evolution and the scientific and detailed analysis of the book of Exodus contrasted with the sentimental and evasive treatment of the gospels, illustrate the straddling tactics referred to. It is impossible to classify such writers as either conservative or liberal. What their more inclusive interests and aims are is impossible to determine. If it is their intention to pick and choose from known facts to give support to *a* theology, all that has been said from the standpoint of conservatives and rigidists, in general, applies to them. In addition they may be reminded that by encouraging the habit of appealing to facts and the views of scientists in some instances they are seriously endangering the ideas and assumptions which they do not wish to question. The psychology of the transfer of learning contains this warning. If a child's ability to think in terms of fact and scientific research is developed in the consideration of certain Old Testament narratives, he is thereby less likely to accept mere opinion in regard to the gospels without questioning. But if, on the other hand, such authors are really desirous of teaching liberalism their present contributions are hopelessly inadequate.

Perhaps the one need of which the writer is most conscious as he concludes this study is for some reliable experimentation to determine how much theology and what portions of theology can be given to primary children with promise of better results than have been discovered. Christian theology has not been graded in terms of the child's experience, but rather in terms of the historic development of theological ideas. Is a gradation in terms of experience possible? And the question of the typical experiences of young children in terms of which the idea of God might be more effectively interpreted is not the whole problem. There is still the question of what experiences these children are capable of having. No great progress can be made until this basic field is thoroughly explored. The present trend away from the Bible and theology may be as much an evasion of difficulty as an attempt at educational expediency. The wisdom of the movement is not yet proved. Those who go on the assumption that teaching about God and the experience of personal relations with Him are essential to childhood have as yet produced nothing that is backed up by careful experimentation. *The Dawn of Religion in the Mind of the Child* by Mumford represents the best that has yet been accomplished in this field, and the recommendations in this book and similar ones are based upon the observations, guesses, and assumptions of individuals.

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